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ABSTRACT

Based on the notion that parents want their children to do well in school but may not realize how much their home life influences their children academically, this document comprises a test of the home learning environment for parents and a "toolkit" for effective parenting. The test is a series of true-false statements designed to identify family characteristics with regard to communication, productivity, nurturance and affection, stable family organization, and achievement by example. The toolkit is presented in eight sections, each including self-evaluations and skill building exercises or practical suggestions for parents. Section 1 of the toolkit discusses the challenges of parenting and the importance of a positive emotional climate, and provides suggestions for improving parenting effectiveness. Section 2 deals with communication, including basic and advanced principles, skill exercises, and individual evaluations. Section 3 addresses competition and cooperation, including basic values, sports, coaching, and how parents can enhance the development of cooperation. Section 4 discusses discipline as a structure for growth, responsibility as an element of discipline, and discipline as a learning experience. Section 5 addresses the process of building self-esteem. Section 6 discusses sex education at home, including basic values, levels of understanding, and sex and intimacy. Section 7 deals with the special challenges of parenting teenagers, while section 8 provides a series of structured problem solving exercises to help a group of teenagers learn how to talk to one another and solve problems effectively in preparation for working out problems with family members. (KB)

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PARENT
TOOLKIT
FOR SUCCESS
WITH CHILDREN

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T. Lee Burnham, Ph.D.

Are You Keeping
Your Child From
Measuring Up In
School?

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A
PARENT TOOLKIT FOR SUCCESS WITH CHILDREN

by
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Dedicated to those whose support made the whole effort possible. My parents, particularly my mother who at 99 is still learning and still teaching. My wife Judy, who made life such a joy and left such an impact at her passing. My sister Joan, who has always been there. My son Clint who taught me the most about being a parent as a result of being forced into being his parent without his mother. Lynn Scoresby, whose influence impacts how I view the world of parents and children. Ross Olsen, whose wisdom and partnership enabled us to work with so many thousands of incredible teens and learn so much about them in the process. Brandon, who helped edit the final version so that it made better sense.

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PARENTING:
A Puzzling Experience

AN INTITIAL OVERVIEW

Did any of your children come with instruction book? It might be said that no one comes to the job of being a parent with any instructions in hand. In reality, however we spend most of our life learning to become parents by observing parents. Experience is after all one of the most powerful components of learning. Educators call it “Observational Learning.”

Parenting styles are passed on from one generation to the next. Our most powerful "parent education" consists of what we see our own parents doing. How many of us at one time or another have not said, "I won't do that when I am a parent," only to act exactly like our own parents when we are under pressure to perform as a parent. Rather than feeling guilty we need to understand that being a parent is a learning process that begins as a child. We ARE influenced by the experiences we have with our own parents. Rather than try to completely divorce ourselves from this "early parenthood education," we should understand the parenting skills that we have learned from our parents. Perhaps we can discover how to modify, direct and channel these basic parenting instincts in the best way possible. Some things we have grown up with as a child we may not be able to change as an adult. Some attitudes and behaviors we may be able to discard and others we may be able to modify. There are, however, some very important attitudes and skills that may be a completely new approach for us and involve a real discovery and an exciting new learning experience.

Parents begin the process by contributing the biological components, which in varying mixtures serve to determine a major portion of each child's personality. Next they establish a relationship with one another and with the world around them serving as an example and a role model that children observe, emulate and absorb. Last of all, parents establish a physical and emotional climate in which children can learn and grow -- or not.

The development of a positive emotional climate in the family begins with the relationship that exists between the Mom and Dad. In observing healthy, functional families a key element seems to be the quality of this parental relationship. To have a strong and healthy relationship does not mean an absence of conflict and difficulty. We should not set goals to have a life or a relationship free of conflict but should instead learn to deal with conflict effectively. Being able to communicate, to set clear rules and to be as consistent as possible are important elements. The driving force that makes it work is emotional not logical. How Mom and Dad

FEEL about each other and how that feeling is expressed in their behavior is very important but they also may be two different things to children. Children are great observers but they are often very poor interpreters. They may interpret certain behaviors as meaning that Mom and Dad hate each other when just the opposite is the case. Parents need to learn to be aware of how their relationship is seen by their children.

Our society has gone out of its way to make it "OK" for adults and families to create lifestyles for themselves other than the traditional family with two biological parents who are of the opposite sex and firmly committed to stay married to each other. This great amount of flexibility and freedom to enter into and depart from relationships may be good or at least convenient for the adults concerned but our current understandings seem to indicate that it is not at all good nor the best situation for children.

Parents must reassure their children about the depth and stability of their relationship. Parents may need from time to time to say something like: "You know that your mother and I have been having an argument the last few days. We had some matters of disagreement that we had to express and get resolved. We have resolved the conflict and we feel good about each other. Our relationship is stronger than ever." The main message is that conflict will occur, it will be dealt with and the end result will be a stronger and more together set of parents. The quality of the relationship that exists between the parents will set the tone and the example for the relationship that exists between the parents and the children as well as between the children. It will also set the tone for the quality and type of relationships that the children will build with others around them.

Self-esteem is a key gift that children get from their parents. Because self esteem is such a basic building block of everything that happens in a child's growth and development we need to understand the elements of the emotional climate in the home that affect the building of self esteem in children. It is not something that should be left to chance.

During much of the first year of life an infant does not really see itself as a separate individual. The infant feels itself to be an extension of mother. This is where self-esteem starts. If mother is treated as a person of value who has ideas and feelings that are of worth to those around her, the child will feel itself to be a person of worth and value. It doesn't seem to matter very much how mother treats father but it matters a whole lot how father treats mother.

Another important part of the pattern is whether parents make only negative and critical comments or whether there is some kind of a balance between negative and positive comments. Often an adult just doesn't say anything about a positive achievement or behavior and only mentions mistakes or problems. Children will soon learn to expect this. Many young people learn that the only way they can get some kind of emotional reaction from an adult is to do something to make them angry.

Children need and long for some type of emotional involvement. The opposite of love is not hate; it is apathy or indifference. When a child feels they somehow are missing out on emotional contact, they are not very good at trying to get what they need. They need to be taught how to invite or request closeness. Any number of simple clues can be taught to children so that you can get emotional status messages from them and in return give positive emotional contact back to them. Children can learn to say, "I need a hug." Unfortunately, what usually happens is, children learn there are any number of things they can do to bring an immediate emotional response from an adult. They can do something to make adults angry and adults usually respond quicker when angry. Having even a negative, anger-filled interaction with an adult is far better than having no response at all. So if you want to produce negative behavior in your children, ignore them.

Parents need to teach family members how to express feelings appropriately. Some people seem to think that if they feel something they should express their feelings in any way they wish. This kind of thinking leads to trouble. Successful family living requires a more positive emotional climate. This climate is maintained by controlling the intensity of expressions of anger, frustration or tension and introducing increasing amounts of positive feelings. It needs to be accepted and appropriate to express feelings of anger, frustration and tension but family members need to be able to express those feelings in such a way that they do not wound or do damage to others.

David is a sixteen year-old son of a single parent. Because of previous conflicts in a dissolved marriage, David had learned that one good way of getting what he wanted was to shout down other people, using foul and abusive language. His mother recognized that to help her son overcome this serious problem, she would have to do two things. First she would have to refuse to have a confrontation with him when he was angry, and second, she would have to help increase the positive, affective experience in her son's life. Needless to say, this required discipline on her part.

On one occasion, David was in fine form and again attempted to manipulate his mother with one of his outbursts. His mother, refusing to give him the negative attention he was after, went to her bedroom, took a hot bath and went to bed. The next morning David came to her and said "Mom, I'm sorry about the way I acted last night. I really love you." She responded, "Son, I love you too and I understand your feelings of frustration. I wonder if you understand how it makes me feel when you act that way?" When he confided that he thought he did know, she said, "Well, could we please think of some other way to express and deal with your anger and frustration?"

This was the beginning of some real, honest communication between mother and son. When parents are able to do this, families maintain a positive, nurturing environment. As a result, both adults and youth tend to be more cooperative. This usually requires that adults show the skills to control their own behavior, by reducing the amount of uncontrolled expressions of frustration and increasing the amounts of calm, relaxed expressions of emotion in dealing with behavior and other significant problems.

Lack of self-esteem is usually a contributing factor when teenagers become heavily involved in substance abuse or a variety of other anti-social activities. Another very important issue, however, is whether or not a child feels accepted by their father. (Mothers have usually been better at communicating caring and accepting than fathers.) There is evidence that children who feel loved and accepted by their fathers are less likely to get into trouble. It is important that children have a relationship with Dad that can be characterized as warm and close emotionally and physically. Fathers who develop such a relationship with their sons and daughters somehow create a different set of strengths in those youngsters making them less likely to become involved in deviant behavior.

Unfortunately, quite often the weak link in the family chain is father. Either he is not physically present or when he is present he does not contribute anything of a positive emotional nature to the growth and development of his children. In some instances alert and caring adults outside of the family can do much to compensate for this lack of support from a father.

Dr. Judith Wallerstein in her book Second Chances, describes the results of her 20 year study of the impact of divorce on children and adults. Contrary to her expectations she found that when she conducted follow-up interviews with families five years after having experienced a divorce, most of them still in crisis. Their wounds were wide open. Turmoil and distress had not noticeably subsided. Adults still felt angry, humiliated, and rejected, and most had not gotten their lives back together. An unexpectedly large number of children were on a downward course. Their symptoms were worse than before. Their behavior at school was worse. Their peer relationships were worse. The illusion that she had held -- that divorce brings an end to marital conflict -- was shattered.

She observes:

"Divorce has ripple effects that touch not just the family involved, but our entire society. As the writer Pat Conroy observed when his own marriage broke up, 'Each divorce is the death of a small civilization.' When one family divorces, that divorce affects relatives, friends, neighbors, employers, teachers, clergy, and scores of strangers. Although more people stay married than get divorced, divorce is not a them versus us problem; everyone, in one way or another, has been touched by it. Today, all relationships between men and women are profoundly influenced by the high incidence of divorce. Children from intact families are jittery about divorce. Teachers from all over the country tell me that their students come to school wide-eyed with fear, saying that their parents quarreled the night before and asking in terror, 'Does that mean they are going to divorce?' Radical changes in family life affect all families, homes, parents, children, courtships, and marriages, silently altering the social fabric of the entire society."

She further reports that divorce is also the only major family crisis in which social supports fall away. When there is a death in the family, people come running to help. After a natural disaster, neighbors rally to assist those who have been hurt. After most such crises, clergymen may call on the family to console adults or speak with children who are badly shaken. But not so with divorce. Friends are afraid that they will have to take sides; neighbors think it is none of their business. Although half the families in the study conducted by Wallerstein belong to churches or synagogues, not one clergyman came to call on the adults or children during divorce. Grandparents may be helpful but are apprehensive about getting caught in the crossfire. They often live far away and feel their role is limited. When a man and a woman divorce, many people tend to act as if they believe it might be contagious. The divorced person is seen as a loose cannon, a rogue elephant, or a black widow. Despite the widespread acceptance of divorce in modern society, there remains something frightening at its core. It is as if married people are afraid that another's divorce will illuminate the cracks in their own relationships. On a visceral level, every divorce threatens to erode our own marriages.

The family structure is the foundation for the development of children. The family comprises the scaffolding upon which children mount successive developmental stages, from infancy into adolescence. It supports their psychological, physical, and emotional ascent into maturity. When the structure collapses, the children's world is temporarily without support. Children, with a vastly compressed sense of time, do not know that the chaos is temporary. They do know they are dependent on the family. Whatever its shortcomings, children perceive the family as the entity providing the support and protection they need. When the structure breaks down it leaves children feeling alone and very frightened about the present and the future.

Dr. Wallerstein further reports:

"For many years, child psychology was preoccupied with the mother-child relationship, as if fathers were secondary figures whose primary role psychologically was to help their sons consolidate a sexual identity."

"Our research is part of a growing body of knowledge that puts this lopsided view of child development back into perspective. Fathers exert a critical influence on their sons and daughters throughout childhood and adolescence, helping to shape their characters, values, and relationships with other people and career choices... Even in divorce children do not dismiss their fathers. It is children of divorce who have taught us that to be separated from their father was intolerable. I have been deeply struck by the distress children of every age suffer at losing their fathers."

"What counts is not the quantity of time but the extent to which the father and child have been able to maintain a relationship in which the child feels valued."

A father is fulfilling a great and wonderful responsibility by helping to create a child and providing materially for them. But, a man's greatest opportunity is to be involved in the process of fathering. The real challenge is to be a part of helping to nurture, support and encourage a child along the path of becoming an independent adult.

In the past it has been the practice for the mother to spend more time with children. In fact the rearing of the children has been sometimes left up to her entirely. It is a grave mistake to underestimate the influence a father can have in the lives of his children. He is in a position to set examples and teach.

The trend toward equality of women has been essential and beneficial, but in some instances this has left a vacuum. As women become more involved in pursuits outside of the family it requires that parents do more to share the duties of parenting. Unfortunately, some men are content to let a vacuum occur. They sit back and allow their children to wander without direction. This tends to create a situation where children must lean more and more on peers for emotional support. The more important this peer support becomes, the more vulnerable a child might become to the appeal of gang membership.

A father has a marvelous opportunity to share his experiences with his family. It is a father's challenge to lead and direct his family in a healthy and democratic manner, not as an authoritarian parent. An effective father will assume a natural position of influence acting with his spouse as a equal partner. His children will grow up knowing it, and they will love and respect him for it. They, in turn, will someday establish families of their own in the same pattern.

The responsibility that parents face in providing for the family materially can never be underestimated. There numerous problems and difficult decisions that must constantly be dealt with in this area. In addition to helping to provide material resources for the family a father needs to be a faithful companion to his wife as well as kind and loving toward his children. Children specifically gain an expectation of their father's relationship with them based on what they observe in his relationship with mother.

The father should help his children to respect and obey laws by respecting and obeying laws himself.

A father is in a better position than anyone in the world to teach his children to honor and respect women. The way he speaks to his wife and about her, and other women will be engraved deeply upon his children's hearts. A father who belittles, ridicules, or cheapens women may pay the price many times over through the actions of his children. A father who treats his wife with respect, tenderness, consideration and as an equal partner will reap a rich reward.

"The real heart and soul of a man are measured by the consideration and understanding and respect he shows to women. By a man's ideal of

womanhood we may know the degree of his manhood."
David Starr Jordan

Think about the message from this poem:

Fathers are large people
Who frequently declare
that "other children" eat their meals
And sit straight on a chair.
"Other children" wash their hands
According to my father.

They never yell, or lose their hats
Or fight, or be a bother.
"Other children," Father says
Speak when they're spoken to.
They answer "Please" and "Thank You"
The way I'm s'posed to do.

I'm sorry for my father,
Just as sorry as can be;
He know such lovely children
'n' gets stuck with one like me.

A father and mother should work together in the disciplining of their children, presenting a united front always. The father should not leave all the disciplining up to the mother, or vice versa.

While it is true children need the secure feeling and material resources which come from what parents provide for the family; they need also to learn lessons from life through their parent's work habits, ambition, and values concerning responsibility. Chances are that children will reflect their parent's attitude whether one of working just for money or to serve others. Parents can teach children to live for the next holiday just for another day off, or they can help them to look forward to work.

Through example, discussions, and encouragement parents can direct children toward preparation for a satisfying career. Parents can help children realize that success in a career comes through doing that which provides the most happiness and satisfaction. Psychological pay should be considered as well as monetary gain. Both parents should be wise enough to know when the family needs a parent at home more than an extra dollar.

Happy relationships between family members are achieved through a variety of ways. One day a father and his family of little children were grouped together in animated conversation. They looked much like a football team in a huddle on the football field. The father was later asked what he was telling the children to make them seem so interested and happy. "Oh, Nothing," he said, "I was just listening." Successful communication between family members is not so much in "telling" as in "listening and understanding."

Does your conversation consist only of "uh-huh" or can you respond enthusiastically? Can you respond with love and understanding to problems? Do you have the empathy to put yourself in the shoes of your child and really know how he feels? Are you easy to talk to? Are you fun to talk to? Are you responsive? Can you joke, tease, and laugh together? Are you demonstrative enough to give a child a feeling of security" Is your interest felt? Is your love felt? Is your understanding felt?

Life brings perplexing and disturbing problems to young people (not that older folks are exempt), and they sometimes grope feverishly for help. Too often they do not know to whom to turn, and yet if we picture an ideal parent in our minds, one of the first things we think of is an understanding adult sharing wisdom and giving counsel to children. It is a shame that all children do not turn more readily to their parents than they sometimes do. The fault certainly lies partly with the children, but perhaps we as parents share more of the blame than we would like to admit.

A young girl spent hours crying because the doctor told her, after a serious operation, that she wouldn't be able to dance at the school Valentine dance. Some adults and parents would be inclined to say, in such a situation, "Oh, don't be silly. You're young. There are many more dancing years ahead for you." A wiser, more understanding parent would exercise empathy and say, "I understand how you feel. It really is a disappointment to miss this special occasion. Would it help you to go watch or would you prefer to have.....?"

When children can find understanding and sympathy, along with wisdom, in their parents, a close companionship can develop. Children can readily tell the difference between genuine interest in their affairs and mock interest.

Parents cannot afford to be too busy to help children with their problems or too impatient to understand them. A child must not only be understood; he needs to be accepted by both parents. Sometimes children get the impression that they are not.

Fathers as well as mothers support their children's activities. Both parents should also become acquainted with the children's teachers. A wise father will do more than just tolerate family activities and traditions; he will support them actively and enthusiastically. He might be ready with a camera to make pictorial records of special occasions.

Along with ideals, examples, teachings, and moments to remember, parents can pass along some tangible things for children to treasure. How children love the post card their mother sent them. A father's favorite book handed down or the pocketknife he had as an Eagle Scout passed on could mean so much in their lives.

I think of a father who spent time with his sons, taking them to Hockey Games. This particular father was a great lover of the fights and brawls that took place on the ice and yelled and screamed encouragement for that kind of behavior. As far as I could tell he had never offered that kind of emotional encouragement or involvement at any other time. Why then, was this father so surprised when his two boys became violent and destructive as they moved into their teenage years. They had been taught that this was the way to earn support and love from their father. This may seem extreme to some but if you will carefully look at how children learn what is acceptable behavior you might decide to look rather differently at some typical fatherly or motherly behavior.

Children learn positive character traits and positive self-esteem from parents who listen, take time to share feelings with them, help them create and become involved in constructive-growth-producing activities and call attention to the child's strengths and successes before they warmly but firmly confront them with their mistakes.

Parents need to make regular assessments of each child's abilities or knowledge in certain areas. Parents should ask the following questions:

1. Does the child have a good attitude toward work and does he/she find satisfaction in completing tasks and doing a good job?
2. Does the child make good use of natural talents and abilities?
3. Does the child have a wholesome, normal and desirable attitude toward sex and sexual feelings?
4. Does the child have a healthy appreciation of money and is he/she able to handle money matters adequately?
5. Can I communicate religious vales to the child and is he/she receptive to my communication?
6. When there is a difference of opinion, are we able to set down together and discuss the difference and come to a workable conclusion for both of us?
7. Does the child have a good sense of responsibility?
8. Are expressions of love and appreciation an important part of the relationship between the child and myself?

9. Is the child beginning to grasp the "why" of the rules he/she is asked to follow?
10. Is the child strong enough to stand up for his own beliefs and does not feel obliged to "follow the crowd?"
11. Does the child accept and respect the standards of the family?
12. Does the child understand what is meant by "talking our feelings out" as opposed to "acting them out in inappropriate behavior?"
13. Does the child have the ability to laugh, to find humor in follies and mistakes, and to keep going when the going gets rough?
14. Does the child have friends who enrich his life and encourage him to be successful and happy?
15. Does the child work to the best of his intellectual ability?
16. Does the child have good control over eating and sleeping habits?
17. Does the child treat others with respect.
18. Do I really care what happens to the child?

Several years ago a project was being considered which was aimed at preventing drug abuse among teenagers. Those who planned and carried out this program felt that the key to solving the problem was to scare teenagers to death. There was very little concern about the accuracy of the information presented as long as it painted a scary enough picture.

Teenagers do not respond to this type of an approach. They have an inner feeling that they personally will never have to bear the consequences of their behavior in any physical way. Instead of being scared and frightened they were challenged to try out drugs. I am convinced that many young people who would never have experimented with drugs, made the decision to find out the “truth” on their own.

Young people quickly became adept at spotting the elements in any attempt to influence them, which are not quite true or are out and out lies. Many teenagers have developed a tendency to throw away all the information that adults give them. They develop the attitude that you can never really trust adults to give you the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Parents and teachers need to realize that they bear the consequences of this attitude. It is important you do not try this approach. Resist all inclinations to use false or overstated information in order to motivate or direct behavior. Honesty really is the best policy.

An important set of skills to build a positive emotional climate is that which enables a person to engage in cooperative interaction. Cooperation is the most important and most basic form of human interaction and the skills of cooperating successfully are some of the most important skills a person needs to master. The basic skills involved here are best taught in a stable home environment while the individual is yet a child or in some other well-structured setting.

There are a variety of things that families can do in order to create a more positive and cooperative family environment. In this type of an environment, children can learn the kinds of attitudes and skills, which will enable them to handle competitive situations in a more productive and healthy way.

Parents should consider the type of process that will create a growth-producing environment. There are no magic answers but there are structure and processes that can assist a family to deal with the stresses and pressure of living together and the challenges of fostering individual growth. Families should work at adopting the following:

Have a Regular Family Council:

Family councils promote a feeling of one-ness in a family. Each person comes to know his individual importance to the family. Children come to realize that their opinions and actions really matter. This is not a time for parents to give lectures but a time for the family to sit and ponder and to share thoughts, ideas and feelings.

Problem solving as a family requires open channels of communications. A free exchange of ideas and information pertinent to the solution. All members of the family should contribute. Give support and appreciation that encourage the participation of ALL family members.

Provide leadership. There must be leadership to coordinate problem-solving efforts. Positions of leadership can change as situations change. The role of leader should be tempered with flexibility and shift as required by differing problems.

Provide for a conflict of ideas. There must be communication and evaluation of conflicting ideas. For better solutions there should be involvement of the total potential of family members.

There must be an agreement as to shared goals and to solving problems as a family. As a family continues to develop problem-solving skills, problems become easier to handle, not because the nature of problems change, but because the family's ability to deal effectively with problems increases.

Have Ativities Making Family Members Feel They Belong:

The handing down of beliefs, customs, stories, activities from parents to children is very important in producing unity in a family. Young children love to talk about their families. This is encouraged in school and other groups. As a family, you should strive to have activities which give family members a real sense of belonging. They can be as simple as making fudge or skiing. What is important is that they are a part of your family life.

Have Mutual Respect and Build Each Other's Self-Esteem:

A person's self-esteem plays a vital part in how they see their world and how they come to value relationships. A workable formula for handling feelings constructively is emphasized by listening with empathy, accepting feelings and provide acceptable outlets for emotional expression.

Children thrive in an atmosphere of warmth, love and acceptance and positive nurturance. They look to the relationship between their parents to serve as a model for their own relationships with others.

Have Fun Together:

Laughter is a great way of releasing tensions and producing a feeling of warmth among people. Children will remember the fun times they have had together as a family more than any other thing. Children who come from homes where there has been a lot of fun and activity, learn that life can also be fun and rewarding. Families should plan one day each week or every other week just for family fun. Show by your example that this comes first before social or business obligations. Children need to know that there is a certain time set aside for the family to be together.

Provide Experiences with the Extended Family:

The close knit family of the past served many functions beyond providing food and shelter. It was the source of recreational activity, the center of social life for all its members. It was also the place where help was always available. If someone became ill it was at home that he was nursed back to health. When the tragedy of death came, home was a haven for survivors. There was security in knowing that the family - not only parents, but grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, brothers and sisters could be counted on to pitch in when they were needed.

Providing experiences with grandparents, aunts and uncles gives children a broader scope of what family really encompasses and also a deep feeling for the sacredness of the family name. One family planned a special evening for grandparents. The children took charge of the meeting, prepared treats, program and even earned money for a small gift of appreciation. Each member in turn told their feelings of appreciation for their grandparents.

Work Together:

Young people need opportunities to feel they are helping and giving to others. When they have none of these experiences, they cannot discover their own strengths and durability. They cannot have the self-respect that comes with knowing you are a good person helping others.

Parents generally tend to under-estimate their children. Children really thrive and family spirit soars when expectations are high and more responsibility is delegated. "Parents who don't allow their youngsters the experiences of working, sharing, giving--even the most affluent of parents--are raising deprived children."

Develop and Discuss a Clear Set of Values:

A family that has a strong moral fiber and a set of clearly described values is more able to stand the buffeting of the world and come out whole. Expressions of love and warmth are as vital to the family as sunshine and rain to the world. Children learn their experiences. If they live in a home where they have positive emotional and moral experiences, their feelings of self-worth is greatly enhanced and they are able to give more freely of themselves in other relationships.

Children need to see that their parents have a clear set of values that they can talk about and explain. Even more important, however, is that children need to SEE this set of values exemplified in their parents' day to day behavior.

Provide a Firm and Consistent Rule System:

Structure is important because it prevents confusion. For example, if children know what time they must go to bed every night, they get used to the idea and can plan on it happening. If bedtime is viewed as an important event and given proper attention it can be a loving, nurturing experience. The children will see that you feel this event is important enough to have your undivided attention and will be more likely to cooperate. One-half hour before bedtime, turn off the television and put away all books and toys, take care of toileting needs, undress and put on night clothes, spend a few minutes with each child individually for prayers or conversation. Being firm and consistent is an important key to fostering good feelings at bedtime.

Parenting is a process that takes a great deal of time, effort and energy and is difficult for one person to do alone. A single parent needs to create opportunities to get feedback and advice from someone else. A set of parents needs to spend time talking to each other about their goals, hopes, expectations and frustrations. Fathers, particularly need to understand their role in this process better.

Parents would do well to see themselves as the directors of a process of development rather than the controllers of behavior. They need to focus some effort at understanding the process of growth and development in children.

THE RESULTS OF EFFECTIVE PARENTING:

1. Child does chore:

Parents were specific in their instructions of what needed to be done and when.

When the parents asked the child to do a task they made sure the child understood the instructions and gave them in a way the child could understand. They made sure the physical conditions were right. They took into consideration the age and physical capabilities of the child and they gave honest praise for a good job.

2. Child works until the task is completed:

Parents helped the child feel a sense of accomplishment for his performance, and produced an atmosphere where this behavior was very rewarding.

Parents showed by their example how to follow through and complete tasks. They were free with their praise. They were thorough in their teaching of what was expected to finish a job.

They had worked to create a positive feeling with the child. They had given lots of positive feedback.

3. Child showed cooperation in working with others:

Parents gave the child many opportunities to work jointly with other family members. There was a high flow of information as to what was expected. There was praise for good work and they were specific in letting each person know his job description.

4. Child participates well in family activities:

Parents made the purpose of the family activities fun. They had given each family member a feeling of their responsibility and their part in the family.

Parents had made the purpose for the family activities a joint decision by allowing the children a voice in the choosing of the activity. They had activities which were well planned according to the age and interests of the children. They used creativity in carrying out activities.

THE RESULTS OF INEFFECTIVE PARENTING

1. The job was never started:

There was a lack of knowledge of what to do. The full details of the job were not explained or the details were explained but forgotten. The child did not pay attention to instructions.

2. The job was started but not finished or done right:

There was lack of knowledge of how to do what was expected. Instructions were not clear. Instructions were too complicated to remember. Parents were unaware of the child's lack of knowledge. The child did not use available sources of information.

3. The child was crying, fussing, and whining that he or she could not do the job:

There was a lack of ability. Parents delegated a job that required more skill, training or ability than the child had. Parents were unaware of the child's physical or mental state of illness, worry or fatigue. The child did not take the trouble to practice.

4. The child ignored instructions and the job:

There was a lack of desire to do what was expected. There was a lack of friendly feelings toward the child. The child was angry with parents and didn't feel like working. The child felt that nobody else was doing the work or did not see any sense in the job.

PRINCIPLES OF CHANGE:

There are some basic principles that have been found to help make it easier for individuals to make positive changes in their life. Some of the things that can make change and growth easier for children are:

- Children tend to change when they have participated in the decision to change.

- Children tend to support change they help design; they tend to resist change they do not help design.
- Children tend to change when they are convinced that rewards for change exceed the pain of change.
- Children tend to change easier when they see their parents changing.
- Children tend to change more readily in an environment free from threat and judgement.
- Children tend to change more readily when they have the competencies, knowledge or skills required by the change.
- Children tend to change to the degree they trust the motives of their parents.
- Children tend to change more readily if they feel able to influence others around them.
- Children tend to change to the degree that they see for themselves that an attempted change has been successful.
- Children tend to change in a series of small steps.
- Children tend to maintain change if their environment supports it.
- Children tend to resist change to the degree that they feel it is imposed upon them.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS;

Do you like yourself? If you do at all and you behave in such a way as to be true to yourself, the chances are that children will come to like you as well, unless you try too hard to "make" them like you.

Think of an orange! If you cut a hole in an orange and squeeze it gently you will get orange juice, if you squeeze it violently you will still just get orange juice. Even if you hit it with a hammer you will still only get orange juice. In other words, an orange is true to itself no matter how much pressure you exert on it or even if you get violent towards it. REMEMBER THE ORANGE AND BE TRUE TO YOURSELF NO MATTER HOW MUCH STRESS OR PRESSURE COMES YOUR WAY.

As much as anything else children need a structure that is clear and consistent. Establish a basic structure and then follow through with it. No matter what structure you devise, know that you could do it better or different and there ought to be some effort to revise and improve but the most important element is having a program that is consistent.

After discussion and consideration establish a set of rules or agreements for your family and then follow the rules simply because you agreed to follow them. No explanation or justification of any rule is necessary. Follow the rules simply because you are individuals of integrity and you follow through on your agreements. Do not get caught up in trying to explain or justify the rules or structure. Family Council is the time to discuss specific family agreements or rules. At other times everyone should understand what is expected and agree to do it. The time for justification or explanation is over.

As a parent you are not alone so do not try to act alone. You have your spouse or others to get counsel and advice from. Don't try to get them to do your job for you but discuss your problems one at a time and get one idea to work on to help you do better. Discuss a problem, find a variety of solutions, pick one solution, work on it and evaluate the outcome. Assess your progress and find one more thing to work on. DO ONE THING AT A TIME.

Do the same thing with your children. If they do not support you, or you do not get along with them, perhaps you need to spend more time listening to them and rebuilding your set of agreements. Sit down with them and ask the following:

- What do you like best about the job I am doing as a parent?
- What do you like least about the job I am doing as a parent?
- What is one thing that you would be willing to help me do differently or better?
- What can we do to help our family have:
    1. A sense of family identity. What are some things we can do to make our family different or one area where we can really excel?
    2. A positive attitude about work.
    3. Positive feelings about other members of the family.

BE POSITIVE!
BE YOURSELF!
WORK ON ONE THING AT A TIME!
GET IDEAS AND HELP FROM OTHERS!
INVOLVE YOUR CHILDREN
GET THEM ON YOUR SIDE!

COMMUNICATION: An Essential Element

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Mark Twain gives us this paragraph on how to harness a team of horses:

"The man stands up the horses on each side of the thing that projects from the front end of the wagon, and then, throws the tangled mess of gear on top of the horses, and passes the thing that goes forward, through a ring and hauls it aft, and passes the thing through the other ring and hauls it aft, on the other side of the horses, opposite the first one, after crossing them and bringing the loose end back, and then buckles the other thing underneath the horse, and takes another thing and wraps it around the thing I spoke of before, and puts another thing over each horse's head with broad flappers on it (to keep the dust out of his eyes) and put the iron thing in his mouth for him to grit his teeth on, going uphill, and brings the ends of those things aft over his head and hitching another thing that goes over his shoulders, to keep his head up when he is climbing a hill and then takes the slack of the thing which I mentioned a while ago, and fetches it aft, and makes it fast to the thing that pulls the wagon, and hands the other thing up to the driver to steer with."

"I have never buckled up a horse myself," said Twain, "but I do not think you do it that way."

Hopefully the basic communication pattern in our homes is clearer than these instructions. All to often, unfortunately, children may be just as confused by what they hear as anyone would be after reading Mr. Twain's instructions.

Effective communication is essential to relationship building of any kind and vital to human growth and development. The most fundamental basic principle of communication is to seek FIRST to understand and then to be understood. This may be the single most helpful attitude we can develop as parents.

Most of us do the very opposite. We want first to be first understood. For example, take a parent who says, "How can I reach my teenagers? They won't listen to me at all!" Examine this expression again. The declaration "They won't listen to me at all" is the answer to the opening question "How can I reach my teenagers?"

Parents may feel certain they are right in what they want to tell their children – and they very well may be - but, like it or not, in order to reach children, parents must listen first. This listening is not something that happens now and then, or here and there or once in a while. Listening to children is something that must happen consistently over a period of time. There seems to be almost a mathematical rule that for every thousand hours you spend listening to children during the first 10 years of their life, they will listen to you for 20 minutes during the next 8 years.

Often when we do listen we are like a rushed driver at a red light. We anxiously wait for the green light so we can go, so we can have our say, so we can be understood. We simply aren't listening - we only stop talking to prepare our next response.

We must diagnose (understand) before we prescribe (advise).

For children to grow and develop into independent adults, lines of communication must be established and kept open between parent and child. To assure that this will happen, you must not be a judge so much as an interpreter. It has been said that children are good observers but poor interpreters. They see what goes on but parents need to help children interpret and discuss their feelings about what they have observed..

Thinking "great thoughts" in a quiet corner, with no interaction with others can eventually lead to insanity. Children, particularly need to take their thoughts and put them into some kind of symbolic or logical system where they can be looked at and analyzed. We all need interaction with others to serve as a reality check and a way of evaluating our thinking.

Several years ago a child was labeled by teachers and counselors as having a severe learning disability with possible organic brain damage. The parents were willing to accept that, but the grandparents asked for a second opinion.

A complete evaluation indicated no sign of any organic or neurological problem but the child for some reason had not learned to think or communicate well. Further investigation revealed that this youngster lived in an environment where he seldom if ever was given the opportunity to talk., His parents did very little talking and seldom listened to his attempts to express himself. The communication pattern in the home was mainly a series of very brief commands and put-downs: "Don't do that!" "Go away!" "Why are you so dumb?" As a result the child did not learn how to talk well, how to think or how to deal with verbal communication. True, this is an extreme example, but it does illustrate a principle that children need to be talked to and they need to be listened to. With work this family began to make some changes in their interaction patterns, the child began to talk more and to learn, and is now working at an appropriate age-level.

A group of parents were given the assignment of taking a tape recorder with them for a week to record their interactions with their children. On one of these tapes a five-year-old child says: "Guess what Mommy," I learned today that all butterflies come from green frogs." The mother reports that she was just about to respond with, "What a silly thing to say!" when she remembered that the tape recorder was going and that the instructor of the parenting class would scold her if she said that.

Instead of reacting with an evaluation or a put down, the mother got down on the floor so that she could be at the child's level and said, "That's interesting, tell me more about that." The child replied, I was only teasing Mommy. At this point the child began a rather long dialogue about several things that were on her mind that she wanted to talk about. She was not going to begin to share anything important with her mother until she was sure that her mother was going to listen. Children often test parents that way. Teenagers will often say something that appears to be completely out in left field to see if we are going to listen or if we are going to overreact, evaluate, or come out with some kind of sarcasm.

Children need to learn to think. They will not learn to do this very well unless they have opportunities to talk and to express their ideas appropriately. To do this they must have adults around them who will listen to them. When children are unsure of an adult's willingness to listen they will test with meaningless or even objectionable material. If you can stick with them for a few minutes they will stop testing and begin to share what they are really thinking and feeling. They are not going to share their inner thoughts with you until they are convinced they can do so without criticism. Make sure that you are on the same level as the child (eye to eye) and make a statement or ask a question that will indicate your readiness to listen. Use open statements or questions that invite a lengthy reply instead of simple yes or no answers.

I asked a group of students to think about the communication patterns and rules in their homes. They were to write down what they felt were the unwritten rules in their homes. One rule was: "No one in this family has a right to express a thought or a feeling without being made fun of, criticized or evaluated." Often father or mother were exempt from this rule but seldom if ever were both exempt and even less seldom were any of the children exempt from it. Such an environment teaches children to keep their thoughts and feelings to themselves, or to say or feel only what is expected of them. In both instances ability to learn is severely hampered if not destroyed.

Young people need to know that you are not going to go to someone else and say, "You know what this crazy kid said yesterday?" Preserve the confidence of the things they tell you. Don't spread them all over, even if you think that others would enjoy the comments. If you feel you must share something, first ask the child's permission.

If a child says something that disturbs you, do not react at the time.

Remain calm and think about it for a day or two. If it still bothers you and you think that it is something that needs correcting or needs comment from you, find a quiet moment when you both feel good about each other and say: "Remember the other day when we were talking. Well, I have been thinking about what you said and I would like to share with you how I feel." Then share your feelings and thoughts. Remember, your intention is to share how you feel and what you think. Do not try to convince or lecture. When you think you have expressed yourself completely enough ask for the child's feelings and wait for a response. In most instances children will consider and usually adopt your point of view as long as it is reasonable and is presented as your point of view rather than as an ultimatum.

We easily admit that communication is an important element in family life, but much of that communication is inadequate. Many assume that verbal communication is the most important element to consider. We even hear about a "Lack of communication." Perhaps in reality, however, most of the problems exist because of communication that is non-verbal and overabundant. The person who says little, but greets every communication from children with sights, groans, shrugs of the shoulders, an air of martyrdom, or complete apathy, may do much more damage to a relationship than one who explodes.

Failure to recognize and allow for personality differences also causes problems. To expect the same type of communication from an extrovert as from an introvert is simply not in accord with human nature. Sometimes children or spouses do not talk about the thoughts and feelings that are important to them because they have found that their particular style of communicating is not acceptable to other members of their family. So they learn to play a certain role and hide their true thoughts and feelings from others.

We can see communication difficulties arising in four basic areas:

- The ability to listen and correctly interpret messages.
- The expression of thoughts and ideas.
- The existence of non-verbal, subconscious messages.
- Individual differences.

The Art of Listening:

Though communication is often defined as an opportunity for self-expression, the inability to listen is perhaps a more serious fault in adults. Parental inability to listen will in all probability create an inability to express in children. In the past we have concentrated too much time and effort looking for the person who is trying to express an idea and not enough on the person who is, or should be, the listener. We can teach people how to be better listeners. Anyone can become a better listener by simply remembering to not interrupt and not argue. Give messages you are paying attention to the message coming your way and you are really trying to understand it.

A good listener needs to recognize the value of letting the other person blow off steam. If you look interested and pay full attention, the other person will be satisfied. Those who feel they have an adequate opportunity to get their views considered or listened to are usually more interested in listening to others.

As a listener you are not responsible for the material being presented to you. Your only responsibility is to listen and to let the other person know that you are listening. You need to let them know you understand what they are trying to say, but you do not need to agree with them.

If you really care and show respect for others, you will have genuine concern for what they have to say. Listening is much more than the mechanical act of hearing. Listening is the giving of close attention for the purpose of gaining information and understanding. One of the great skills of communication is the ability to listen with understanding. Many of us feel we are good listeners just because we have the self-restraint to be quiet while another is talking. However, there is a big difference between passively sitting there and actively listening with understanding. To listen with understanding is to share with the speaker his perception and his emotion. It is to "walk for awhile in his moccasins." Listening is active. A good listener is involved, interested, concerned.

James Stephens wrote, "I have learned that the head does not hear anything until the heart has listened, and that what the heart knows today the head will understand tomorrow." Listen with the heart. Practice empathy. Put yourself in the other person's place and try to hear their problems in your heart.

Listen with patience. People deserve unhurried time. Even five minutes can be made unhurried if the attitude is right. Listen with compassion and with depth. Create a climate in which others may confidently speak; an atmosphere of candor, consideration and kindness that permits and encourages children to say those significant words, "I need help." Listen to help, to comfort.

Students of various ages were asked, "How do you tell if a teacher is really listening to you?" Some significant things can be learned from their answers:

A seventy-one-year-old woman said, "He asks me questions about what I am saying, so I feel free to tell him some more. He can repeat what I have said, so I know he listened to me."

A group of ten and eleven-year-old boys commented: "She turns around and looks at me." "She acts like she has time to stop." "Her face looks interested."

A forty-six-year old man said, "He understands how I am feeling at the moment. He says things that make me know he is trying to understand what I am feeling as well as what I am saying.

A class of seventeen and eighteen-year-old girls made these comments: "She doesn't interrupt me." "She pays full attention to me. I can tell by her eyes and what she says to me." "She doesn't start giving advice before I even get finished with what I am saying."

We can conclude from these statements that an effective listener looks interested, makes appropriate, thoughtful questions and comments about what is being said, is calm and alert and maintains eye to eye contact.

A disinterested, inactive listener on the other hand, inhibits communication by, fidgeting, appearing nervous, or being anxious to cut off the conversation, interrupting frequently, ignoring the feeling behind the words, giving unasked for advice and judgements, giving a "blank look," making comments that are irrelevant to the conversation and looking away.

A parent who fails to listen is likely to be as ineffective as a doctor who does not listen to a description of symptoms and cannot accurately understand or diagnose the underlying disease. Parents cannot effectively help their children when they do not understand the questions, problems, and conflicts that concern their children. Parents who really understand, are able to listen to a child and watch for clues in posture, facial expressions, and tone of voice. They do not jump to conclusions about the child, giving all kinds of good advice. Preaching about what the child should do when all the child really wants is a listening ear.

How We Express Thoughts and Ideas:

We can put most expressions from parents to children into categories. Sometimes these types of statements get in the way and at other times they may be appropriate. Think about these kinds of statements and try to think about the purposes that might be accomplished by them.

Directing, Ordering, Commanding: ("You must...," "You have to...," "You will...")

Such responses can produce fright or active resistance and rebellion. They also invite "testing." Nobody likes to be ordered or commanded - thus resentment is produced. Such responses may cut off any further communication from the child, or they may provoke defensive or retaliatory communication. Often children will feel rejected - their own needs are being ignored. In front of others, children may feel humiliated by such responses. Even if a child obeys, he may try to get back at the adult later or he may respond immediately with anger.

Warning, Threatening, Admonishing: ("You had better...," "If you don't then...")

Such responses are like directing or ordering except that the adult brings in the threat of using power. These responses invite "testing." They may cause the child to obey but only out of fear. As with directing and ordering, these responses may produce resentment, anger, resistance and rebellion.

Moralizing, Preaching, Obliging: ("You Should...," "You ought..," "It is your duty to...," "It is your responsibility...," "You are required...")

Such responses are like directing and ordering except that the adult is dragging in "duty" and some vague external authority. Their purpose is to make the child feel guilty or to feel a sense of obligation. Children sense the pressure of such messages and frequently resist and dig in their heels. Such messages also communicate lack of trust Ä "You are not wise enough." Children often responds with "Who says I should?" Why should I?"

Persuading with Logic, Arguing, Instructing, Lecturing: ("Do you realize...," "Here is why you are wrong...," "That is not right...," "The facts are...," "Yes, but...")

Such responses provoke defensiveness and often lead into counter-arguments. They may also make the child feel inferior because they imply the adult's superiority. Persuasion, more often than not, simply makes the child defend his own position more strongly. Children may feel "you always think you are right." Having logic on your side does not always bring forth compliance or agreement. Children often say, "I always get long lectures," or "They make me feel I'm wrong or stupid."

Advising, Recommending, Providing Answers or Solutions: ("What I would do is...," "Why don't you...," "Let me suggest...," "It would be best for you...")

It is not true that people always want advice. Advice implies "superiority" and can make the child feel inadequate and inferior. "I should have thought of that." The child may respond to advice with resistance and rebellion "I don't want to be told what to do." Often children resent suggestions by adults, "Let me figure it out myself." Failure to follow adults' advice may make children feel guilty or that they have let the adult down. Advice can also make children dependent; it does not encourage their own creative thinking. A child may simply respond by feeling the adult just doesn't understand, "How could you suggest that, you just don't understand" Also, if the adult's advice turns out wrong, the child can duck responsibility, "They suggested it; it wasn't my idea."

Evaluating, Judging Negatively, Disapproving, Blaming, Name-Calling, Criticizing: ("You are bad," "You are lazy," "You are not thinking straight," "You are acting foolishly.")

More than any other type of message, this makes children feel inadequate, inferior, incompetent, bad or stupid. It can make them feel guilty, too. Often children respond very defensively -- nobody likes to be wrong. Evaluation cuts off communication, "I won't tell them what I feel if I am going to get judged." An adults' psychological size, often make children accept such judgements as being absolutely true, "I am bad." Evaluation by adults shapes the child's later self-concept. "I am a slow learner." "I am not pretty." Another response of children to evaluation by adults is to evaluate right back, "You're not as good yourself."

Praising, Judging, or Evaluating: ("You're a good boy," "You've done a good job," "That's a very good drawing," "I approve of...," "That's a nice thing to do.")

Praise and positive evaluation may not always have the effect we would like. Sometimes the child feels praise as manipulative or simply false. Praise at an inappropriate moment can stop communication from the child. There are times when any evaluation or judgement even if it is positive can embarrass children, even make them angry at adults. In a child's eyes it can tag the adult as being superior and having the right to evaluate when what they need is a non-evaluative listener. In some situations, children can't separate praise from expectation. Thus, what is meant as reward comes across as implied expectation. "I will continue to be pleased with you as long as you continue to do what I say." Praise, to be of value, must be concrete and specific.

Supporting, Reassuring, Excusing: ("It's not so bad...," "Don't worry," "you'll feel better...," (That's too bad...")

Adults often send these messages to children without understanding they can have negative effects. To reassure a child may make him feel that you don't understand "It is easy for you to say that, but you don't know how I feel." Supporting messages can also convey to the child, "I'm not comfortable having you feel inadequate. I can't accept such feelings; start feeling more adequate." If things do not "turn out all right" for the child, then he can feel resentful toward you for your reassurance, for misleading him. Telling a child who feels unattractive to girls that he is really quite good-looking can evoke strong feelings of hostility. He also may disbelieve you -- "You're just saying that to make me feel better." Typical responses of children are these: "But Mother, I am ugly," "I don't want another boyfriend, I want him." "You don't understand -- I'll always be dumb in math."

Diagnosing, Psychoanalyzing, Interpreting, Offering Insights: ("What you need is..." "What's wrong with you is..." "You're just trying to get attention..." "You don't mean that." "I know what you need." "Your problem is...".

To tell a child what he is "really" feeling, what his "real" motives are, or why he is behaving the way he is can be very threatening - "She always think she knows what I'm feeling." Playing "Psychoanalyst" with children is dangerous and frustrating to the child. If your analysis is wrong, the child resists; if it is "right," the child can feel exposed, naked, trapped. The "here-is-what-you-need" message implies that the adult is superior -- knows more than the child. Children get resentful and angry when adults "interpret" their motives. Interpretation, more than likely, will stop communication from the child rather than encourage him to tell you more.

Questioning, Probing, Cross-Examining, Prying, Interrogating: ("Why..." "Who..." "Where..." "What..." "How..." "When...?")

The response of children to probing, like that of adults, is often to feel defensive or "on the witness stand." Many questions are threatening because the child doesn't know why the adult is questioning him - "What are you driving at?" Children often feel the adult is "nosey" - "She always has to know where I've been." Questioning can convey lack of trust, suspicion or doubt about the child's ability - "You don't need to ask me if I know the way - I've been there before." Some kinds of probing questions make a child feel he is being led out on a limb only to have it later sawed off. ("When did you call Jane for the date? Only yesterday! Well, no wonder she already had a date.") When adults ask questions, they imply they are gathering information so that they can solve the child's problem rather than letting the child solve it for himself -- "If I tell my parents what they ask, then I have to listen to what they say." Questions drastically restrict the range of what children might say if allowed to speak spontaneously.

Diverting, Avoiding, By-Passing, Digressing, Shifting: ("Let's not talk about it now." "Not at the dinner table," "Forget it." "That reminds me...," "We can discuss it later.")

Such responses make children feel you are not interested. They may feel you don't want to understand. They communicate lack of respect of the child. Such responses can make a child feel rejected and/or guilty.

Kidding, Teasing, Joking, Using Sarcasm: ("Why don't you burn down the school." "When did you read a newspaper last." "Get up on the wrong side of the bed?" "When did they make you Principal of the school?"

Such responses effectively cut off communication, make the child feel you are not interested and shows lack of respect. Or a child may feel you really don't understand how badly or seriously he feels about something. Responses such as these often stem from hostility in the adult; consequently, they may provoke counter hostility.

This is not to say that parents should never use any of the above responses. Some of the above approaches may be appropriate at any particular time. What is important, is that you think about the impact of your approach and choose your approach based on what is best for the individual involved, not just based on what is easiest for you. Adults should be careful about these particular responses. Spend time encouraging children to talk more instead of shutting them off.

Non-Verbal Messages

Research has shown that about 70% of our communication with others is carried out on a non-verbal level. Ways in which people stand, hold their heads, drum their fingers, smile, or frown are important and can often tell you far more than words. Often, however, we can perceive these messages inaccurately and subconsciously and find ourselves in big trouble with little or no awareness of the interaction taking place. Every action provides a sensory clue that can be read in one way or another. Those who are acutely aware of these clues and responses are often able to add up all of the clues and then jump beyond them to another level of understanding. This can be helpful with children, because we may be able to understand what is bothering them before they even begin to speak to you. Parents with this ability can guide their children in their attempts to express what is going on inside them. Misread a non-verbal clue, however, and you may try to force your child or spouse into an attitude or feeling that they do not really have. When you are making assumptions based on non-verbal clues you have to be willing to treat your assumptions as being very tentative. Use the skills of paraphrasing to find out if you are accurate and make sure that the person you are listening to does not get the feeling that you are trying to force them into meeting your assumptions or expectations. Don't force people into corners.

By being sensitive and aware of non-verbal clues, we can learn when to avoid the wrong moment to begin speaking and how to untangle confusions caused by inconsistent messages. Father may say to a child, "I'm listening, I'm listening," while his body is attentively hunched over the television set. The child may not understand why he feels so confused and unable to say anything. One message says "I'm listening" while another message says "Can't you see I'm busy, go away."

Dealing With Individual Differences

To make sure that you can involve yourself in another persons life it is important that you do not have feelings of distrust or prejudice towards particular problems that might come to you. Imagine dealing with a child when you have the feeling that one or more of the following things may be true:

SPEAKS ONLY THE TRUTH - IS USUALLY A LIAR
IS HETEROSEXUAL - MAY BE HOMOSEXUAL
IS A RELIGIOUS PERSON - IS AN ATHIEST
LOVES PARENTS - HATES PARENTS
RESPECTS PROPERTY - STEALS
RESPECTS LIFE - IS DESTRUCTIVE

Think about how you would deal with each one of these situations. You will find that you can be quite comfortable with anyone of them if you keep your focus on the person who is your child rather than on what you think the problem might be. Think about talking to each child, asking them only questions that begin with the H's and W. As you think about the process of beginning to understand each of these different types, imagine your feelings both positive and negative.

A Summary of Basic Principles

Children who have parents who can confidently and comfortably talk and who will listen to them are fortunate. Many children have the experience of living with parents who are uninterested in anything they have to say. It may appear parents do not want to be part of any meaningful communication, but perhaps they do not know how. Responses that parents typically make to children's messages are, in many circumstances perfectly appropriate. But some of these responses can also build barriers and cut off further expression from the child.

Consider the following poem. It was written to convey what a teenager felt adults were really communicating.

Don't' Get Close

Don't get close.
You might make me pause and
Interrupt my pose.
If you want to stay
To watch, you may
But don't contrive
To get inside.
Inside my world where conscience hides.
You'll break the chain
that holds out pain.
You can stand aside
And watch my act
But, stay outside.
If you want to love
Please go away.
There is no room for love inside.
Inside my world, there's only pride
And walls to keep the pain outside.
If you want to watch, you may
But you'll have to keep your love away.
Stand back a bit
Just close enough to see and hear
But not quite close enough to feel
The life inside, the soul that's real.
Stand back and watch
But don't annoy.
My beauty's here to be enjoyed
But not too much
I can't be touched.
Your life is built on chance and hope
But I prefer to stay remote
From all the insecurity
Outside the wall that shelters me.
Just don't get close
And you can stay
But keep your love and pain away.

Without realizing it do you give the same message to other people around you? How do you know?

AN APPLICATION: CHILD-CENTERED INTERVIEWS

A child once asked his father what he was doing when he visited privately with people who came to his office. The father replied: "I'm holding a interview to help them with their problems."

After some thought the child responded: "Dad, why can't I have an interview? I hardly ever get to discuss my problems alone with you."

To the child the word interview meant a time to be alone with his father discussing whatever he wanted to. His interests, his problems, his concerns were to control the interaction, rather than the father's. This is a great notion for parents to accept and carry out a practice of holding private interviews with each child on a regular basis. It should not be uncommon at any time for a child to say, "Mom (or Dad), I want an interview."

The benefits of such a practice are significant. Each child knows he or she will have their day in court, an un-rushed time when the full attention of a parent is given to their problems and concerns. Relatively few young people (or adults, for that matter) have the experience of being fully listened to without fear of being censored, lectured or compared.

To simply know one can have an understanding private talk, in the future, inspires responsible behavior in the present. The frustrating feeling that no one will really listen, much less understand, leads to irresponsible behavior, even to extreme irrational measures calculated to get attention at any cost.

From the unguarded private visit will flow increased warmth, affection, understanding and confidence. Parents will be both startled and enlightened by the openness and by the live concerns and interests of their youth. And the youth will, in turn vividly sense the sincerity and depth of concern and interest in their parents and will therefore more readily follow their leadership. What respect is communicated! What recognition and intrinsic value is bestowed!

When communication is honest and continual and when it flows openly in both directions, all problems are easier to solve -- all relationships have more depth.

Of course, there will be a lot of interaction which grows naturally out of everyday situations, but having a formalized private visit keeps parent-child communication from falling between the cracks. We need to structure times for family councils, family prayers, and private visits or they will simply be pushed aside by the heave and thrust of that which is structured -- the tasks of life.

To adopt the practice of regular private visits is relatively easy with young children. They love the attention. With older children it is more difficult. Interaction patterns and defenses are more set. Having private visits with them may feel awkward at first, so a parent may need to start in a more natural way beginning with shared everyday activities and interactions. It may take the commitment and determination of an upstream swimmer to regularly have one-to-one visits and to make them successful. But how they will pay off!

Youth need and want direction and discipline. Considerable time, structured and unstructured, should be devoted to this. But there also needs to be some time given on a private basis for just listening, empathizing, and supporting. If this becomes a time for lecturing or disciplining or parent-initiated advising, many young people will simply not open up and parents won't know their hearts.

They need to feel that "there is one time, one twenty minute (or so) segment of the 168 hour week, that is completely mine. In it, Dad (or Mom) will listen and try to understand."

Such youth-centered visits will test self-restraint and patience, but ironically they will also increase the positive influence of teaching and disciplining at other times. Influence, like communication, is a two-way street.

When you want to talk to children and get them to talk about their honest thoughts and feelings you need to keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Establish rapport. Be a person the individual can like. Become a real person. Be warm, friendly and out-going
- Be honest. If you don't know, say so.
- Be yourself. Don't intellectualize.
- Be consistent. Establish limits and expectations.
- Don't Lecture. Avoid giving them a feeling they are being criticized.
- Listen. Most people are rarely listened to. Show an interest in what they bring to you. Don't rush them.
- Deal with concrete everyday occurrences. Try to be immediately helpful.
- Know the language of the age group represented.
- Allow for dependence, but work toward independence. Work through ambivalence.
- Allow for acting out. Don't overreact. Be prepared to have your willingness to listen tested. Deal with inappropriate behavior and language calmly and firmly yet without criticism, judgement or sarcasm. Encourage reality testing.

- Build trust and confidence by being open, frank, fair and dealing with problems.
- Develop an ability to empathize. Do not condone unrealistic attitudes or behavior. Avoid over-reacting. Be accepting of the individual, not the behavior.
- Recognize your anger with them if their behavior provokes you. Don't hide your feelings behind a facade.
- Avoid exhorting the child to "open up, " trust me," "if you rely on me and share things with me, all will go well." This causes mistrust. We know that it isn't true.
- Don't moralize. Respect their rights. Keep an open mind.
- Be aware of and ready to deal with intense emotional feelings.
- Recognize their limitations and don't push them beyond the limits of their capabilities.
- Don't give advice. Give alternatives. Let them make the decisions.
- Provide motivation and stimulation.

Such a child-centered approach is not just a computerized technique or carefully learned skill but an attitude and a desire to understand. Help children to understand and experience themselves as responsible individuals whom have value and worth and they will then learn to solve their problems in a meaningful way and begin to clarify their own values and commitments to life. REMEMBER: You conversation should be person focused, not problem focused. The particular problem you are dealing with may represent only a temporary situation. The person you are dealing with is real and will probably be around for a while.

Know as much about the child as possible. Know their interests, their likes and dislikes. Carefully observe their behavior. Spend some time thinking and talking about the child as a parent team or with someone else who knows the child well -- a grandparent or teacher. I helped a youth develop a "Test of Me." The parent was so certain that he understood his daughter. He was quite surprised to find that he failed to pass the test. He did not know as much as he thought he knew.

Know yourself and your limits. Practice, on yourself, with some of the principles that you want to cover with a youth. If you expect you are going to have a conversation about some serious concerns that you have as a parent make sure that you have considered many of the possibilities that might come up and practice your approach on yourself before the conversation begins.

Do not ask questions that would force a youth to tell a lie. If you do force a youth into telling you a lie you just may have created a bigger problem than the youth had to start with. Don't ask questions that require only a YES or NO answer. Ask questions that begin with WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY and HOW! Stay clear of a style of questioning that even begins to be an interrogation and don't become too demanding or prying. Be a listener, not just a talker. Conduct an interview anywhere, anytime. Take a walk, play a game and remember this is a CONVERSATION.

Parent may not attempt such an activity because they are afraid that they will make a mistake. They probably just don't have a very clear understanding of just what good it would do. They say "I will do that someday" or "it isn't really so important." "I don't really have the time to practice all of this on someone." "When I am older I will learn how to do that or when I become a grandparent I will also learn how to do that." "Why should I worry about doing an interview anyway it probably doesn't matter." "It just takes to much effort." "If I found out something I wouldn't know what to do with it." "I just don't have the talent." A perceived lack of talent or ability is not a problem. Parents who are just not sensitive to the needs of other people or are too involved in themselves are a major problem for children

Give yourself a chance to practice. If you don't do it right the first time you can always try a different approach. As long as you are making an effort your children will have a great deal of tolerance. Treat them the way you wanted to be treated when you were their age. Become involved with them. Young people don't need a buddy, they have plenty of peer buddies, they need a true friend. Someone that really cares about them and is willing to tell them when they have made mistakes.

If parents do not talk to their children who will? If parents don't gather their children together as a family, who will? If parents don't teach them, who will?

The first thing you do in your practice is to force yourself to begin every sentence with a phrase starting with the W's and How. Don't allow yourself to be involved in a conversation without using this tool. It will seem very out of place at first but you will have people become very close to you very fast because of the interest that you will be showing in them.

This simple challenge will make your life different. Talking to your children in a positive way with only their interests as your concern will cause them to feel and act differently towards you. The reason that you must practice this is to make sure that you have developed a new habit. After a period of time you will have the tools that you need to have a personal interview with anyone.

ADVANCED PRINCIPLES

A Scale for Measuring Communication Effectiveness

There are eight levels of communication effectiveness. The lowest level is number 1 and the highest (usually reserved for therapy) is number 8. What level do you normally use?

1. Ignore the person.
2. Take a word or phrase of what someone has said to take off on a whole new conversation. "That reminds me of..." "Oh, speaking of....." The focus of attention is always drawn back to the speaker.
3. Probing or Interrogation – always asking questions. There are times when this is important in order to obtain information, but in and of itself it is not the most effective way to communicate.
4. Dealing with the content of the message only.
5. Dealing with the feelings expressed by the person you are listening to.
6. Dealing with both the content and the feelings expressed.
7. Dealing with both the content and the feelings being expressed and making accurate inferences about what is going on in the individual's life.
8. Making a detailed analysis of the individual's personality, feelings and problems.

Levels 1 and 2 are completely non-productive. They are most often seen at a social gathering. Many casual conversations that could be more meaningful are stuck on level 2.

Level 3 will gain information and is sometimes an appropriate level, but for deeper relationships, levels 5 and 6 are the most productive. Level 7 can produce some very interesting interactions between parents and children.

The Principle of Feedback

Use the principle of feedback to evaluate and adjust your own behavior as well as a way of giving guidance to your children. "Feedback" is a way of receiving help in considering changing behavior. It is communication to a person , which gives information about the impact a person, is having on others. As in a guided missile system, feedback helps an individual keep his behavior "on target" and thus better achieve their goals.

The essential criteria of useful feedback are:

- It is descriptive rather than evaluative. By describing one's own reaction, it leaves the individual free to use it or not to use it as they see fit. By avoiding evaluative language, it reduces the need for the individual to respond defensively.

* It is specific rather than general. To be told that one is "dominating" will probably not be as useful as to be told that "just now when we were deciding the issue, you did not listen to what others said, and I felt forced to accept your arguments or face attack from you."

* It takes into account the needs of both the receiver and giver of feedback. Feedback can be destructive when it serves only our own needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end.

* It is directed toward behavior which the receiver can do something about. Frustration is only increased when a person is reminded of some shortcoming over which they have no control.

* It is solicited rather than imposed. Feedback is most useful when the receivers themselves have formulated the kind of questions, which those observing can answer.

* It is well-timed. In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior. Depending, of course, on the person's readiness to hear it and the support available from others.

* It is checked to insure clear communication. One way of doing this is to have the receiver try to rephrase the feedback received to see if it corresponds to that the sender had in mind.

* When feedback is given, both giver and receiver have the opportunity to check with others about the accuracy of the feedback. Is this one man's impression or an impression shared by others?

Response Style Examples

Response Style	Examples
Using Silence	Be comfortable being quiet
Accepting	Yes. Uh Hmm. I follow what you said. Nodding.
Giving Recognition	Good Morning Charlie. You've tooled a leather wallet. You've combed your hair different.

Offering Self	I'll sit with you awhile. I'll stay here with you.
Giving Broad Openings	What do you want to talk about? What are you thinking? Where would you like to begin?
Offering General Leads	Go on. And then? Tell me about it.
Placing the event in time or in sequence	What seems to lead up to...? Was this before or after...? When did this happen?
Making Observations	You appear tense. Are you uncomfortable when you...? I notice that you're biting your lips. It makes me uncomfortable when you...
Encouraging Descriptions	Tell me when you feel anxious. What are your perceptions? What is happening?
Encouraging Comparison	Was this something like...? Have you had similar experiences?
Restating	Sam:: I can't sleep. I stay awake all night. Tom:: You have difficulty sleeping?
Reflecting	Sam: Do you think I should tell Ed? Tom: Do you think you should? Rick: My brother spends all my money and then has the nerve to ask for more. Sue: This makes you to feel angry.
Focusing	This point seems worth looking at more closely.
Exploring	Tell me more about that. Would you describe it more fully? What kind of work?
Giving Information	My name is... My purpose in being here is...

	I'm taking you to the...
Seeking Clarification	I'm not sure that I follow. What is the main point of what you said?
Presenting Reality	I see no one else in the room. That sound was a car backfiring. Your mother is not here.
Voicing Doubt	Isn't that unusual? Really? That's hard to believe.
Seeking Consensual Validation	Tell me whether my understanding of it agrees with yours. Are you using this word to convey the idea...?
Verbalizing the Implied	Sam: I can't talk to you or to anyone. It's a waste of time. Sue: You feel no one understands? Rick: My wife pushes me around just like my mother and sister did. Sam: Is it your impression that women are domineering?
Encouraging Evaluation	What are your feelings in regard to...? Does this contribute to your discomfort?
Attempting to Translate into Feelings	Sally: I'm dead. Mother: Do you mean you feel lifeless? Or do you feel life is without meaning? Tom: I'm way out in the ocean. Dad: It must be lonely. or You seem to feel deserted.
Suggesting Collaboration	Perhaps you and I can talk and find what makes you anxious.
Summarizing	Have I got this straight?

	You've said that... During the past hour you and I have discussed..
Encouraging Formulation of Action	What could you do to let your anger out harmlessly? Next time this comes up, what might you do to handle it?

Paraphrasing

If you tell somebody your phone number they will usually repeat it to make sure they heard it correctly. However, if you make a complicated statement, most people will express agreement or disagreement without trying to insure they are responding to what you really meant. Parents often assume what they understand from a statement is what the child really meant to say.

How do you check to make sure that you understand another person's ideas, information or suggestions as they meant them? How do you know that their remark means the same to you as it does to them?

Of course, you can get the child to clarify their remark by asking, "What do you mean?" or "Tell me more," or by saying, "I don't understand." However, after he has elaborated, you still face the same question, "Am I understanding his idea as he intended it to be understood?" Your feeling of certainty is not evidence that you do in fact understand.

I once worked with a program that brought a group of Japanese students to tour the United States every summer. These students were usually picked for their ability to speak English so there were very few real communication problems. One Summer, however, a student came who spoke no English at all, except for the phrase - "Yes, I understand." We went through three whole weeks before it became known that he had not understood anything at all. We had completely relied on his statement "Yes, I understand," to indicate that he had indeed understood. It was only when a staff member stopped long enough to ask, "What do you really understand," that it became clear what was happening.

If you state in your own way what another's remarks convey to you, they can begin to determine whether their message is coming through as they intended. Then if they think you misunderstand, they can speak directly to the specific misunderstanding you have revealed. The term PARAPHRASE can be used for ANY MEANS OF SHOWING THE OTHER PERSON WHAT HIS IDEA OR SUGGESTION MEANS TO YOU.

Paraphrasing is a way of revealing your understanding of another person's comment in order to test your own understanding. It is a way of being an active listener. An additional benefit of paraphrasing is that it lets the other person know that you are interested in them. It is evidence that you do want to understand what they mean. If you can satisfy the other person that you really do understand their point, they will probably be more willing to attempt to understand your views.

Paraphrasing, is an important tool in attempting to bridge the interpersonal gap, particularly between adults and children. It increases the accuracy of communication, and thus the degree of mutual or shared understanding, and the act of paraphrasing itself conveys feelings...your interest in the other person, your concern to see how they view things.

Some might think of paraphrasing as merely putting the other person's ideas in another way. They try to say the same thing with different words. Such word-swapping may result merely in the illusion of mutual understanding.

For example:

Sarah: Jim should never have become a teacher.
Fred: You mean teaching isn't the right job for Jim?
Sarah: Exactly! Teaching is not the right job for Jim.

Instead of trying to reword Sarah's statement, Fred might have asked himself, "What does Sarah's statement mean to me?" In that case the interchange might have sounded like this:

Sarah: Jim should never have become a teacher.
Fred: You mean he is too harsh on the children?
Sarah: On no. I meant that he has such expensive tastes that he can't earn enough as a teacher.
Fred: Oh, I see, You think he should have gone into a field giving him a higher standard of living?
Sarah: Exactly! Teaching is not the right job for him.

Effective paraphrasing is not a trick or a verbal gimmick. When you first begin to try to use this skill, you will feel uncomfortable and unsure of yourself. Just give yourself some time to become comfortable with this new behavior. Effective paraphrasing requires a certain attitude. An attitude that comes from a real desire to know what the other person really means. To satisfy this desire you share with the person the meaning his comment had for you so that they can check whether it matches the meaning they intended to convey.

If the other's statement was general, it may convey something specific to you.

Larry: I think this is a very poor textbook.
You: Poor? You mean it has too many inaccuracies?
Larry: No, the text is accurate, but the book comes apart too easily.

Possibly the other person's comment suggests an example to you.

Laura: This text has too many omissions; we shouldn't adopt it.
You: You mean that the book does not cover all time periods in American History equally well?
Laura: Yes, that's one example. It also lacks any discussion of the development of the arts.

If the speaker's comment was very specific, it may convey a more general idea to you.

Ralph: Do you have 25 pencils I can borrow for my class?
You: Do you jut want something for them to write with? I have about 15 ballpoint pens and 10 or 11 pencils.
Ralph: Great. Anything which writes will do.

Sometimes the other person's idea will suggest its inverse or opposite to you.

Stanley: I think the Teachers' Union acts so irresponsible because the administration has ignored them.
You: Do you mean the Teacher's Union would be less militant now if the administration had consulted with them in the past?

Expressing Feelings

Another element important to clear communication is the expression of feelings. To communicate your own feelings accurately or to understand those of others is difficult. The expressions of emotion may take many forms. Feelings can express themselves in bodily changes, in actions and in words. Any specific expression of feelings may actually express a variety of different feelings. A blush, for example, may indicate the person is feeling pleased but it may also indicate that the person feels annoyed, embarrassed or uneasy. Likewise, a specific feeling does not always get expressed in the same way. For example, a child's feeling of affection for his teacher may lead him to blush when she stands near his desk, to touch her as she passes him, to watch her as she walks around the room, to tell her "You're nice" to bring his pet turtle to show her, etc. Different forms of expression indicate the child's feelings of affection.

When you are attempting to understand the feelings of another person your perceptions are likely to be inaccurate and misleading. What may be interpreted as an expression of anger, for example, may instead mean hurt feelings or fear.

A further obstacle to the accurate communication of feelings is that your perception of what another is feeling is based on so many different kinds of information. When somebody speaks, you notice more than just the words. You note gestures, voice tone, posture, facial expression, etc. In addition, you are aware of the immediate present situation -- the context in which the interaction is occurring. You are aware of whether somebody is watching, for example. Therefore, you make assumptions about how the situation influences what the other is feeling. Beyond all of this you also have expectations based on your past experiences with the other individual.

You make inferences from all of this information -- words, non-verbal clues, the situation, your expectations. These inferences are influenced by how you feel at the time. What you perceive the other to be feeling, then, often depends more upon what you are feeling than upon the other person's actions or words. For example, if you are feeling guilty about something, you may perceive others as being angry with you. If you are feeling insecure, depressed or discouraged about yourself, others may seem to be expressing disapproval of you.

Communicating your own and understanding the feelings of others is an extremely difficult task. Yet if you wish others to respond to you as a person, you must help them understand how you feel. Likewise, if you are concerned about the other as a person and about your relationship with them, you must try to understand their emotional reactions.

Although we usually try to describe our ideas clearly and accurately, we often do not try to describe our feelings clearly. Feelings get expressed in many different ways but we do not usually attempt to identify the feelings themselves.

One way to describe a feeling is to identify or name it. "I feel angry." "I feel embarrassed." "I feel comfortable with you." However, we do not have enough names or labels to encompass the broad range of human emotions, and so we invent other ways to describe our feelings, such as the use of similes. "I feel like a tiny frog in a huge pond." A girl, whose friendly overture had just been rebuffed, said, "I feel as though I have just had an arm amputated."

A third way to describe a feeling is to report what kind of action the feeling urges you to do. "I feel like hugging and hugging you." "I'd like to slap you." "I wish I could walk off and leave you."

In addition, many figures of speech serve as descriptions of feelings. "I just swallowed a bushel of spring sunshine."

When describing your feelings, try to make clear what feelings you are experiencing by identifying them. The statement must:(1) refer to "I," or "my," and (2) specify some kind of feeling by name, simile, action urge or other figure of speech.

The following examples show the relation between two kinds of expressions of feelings, (1) those that describe your emotional state and (2) those that do not. Notice that expressions of feelings, which describe the speaker's emotional state, are more precise, less capable of misinterpretation and, thus, convey more accurately what feelings are affecting the speaker.

Expressing Feelings by Describing Your Emotional State	Expressing Feelings Without Describing Your Emotional State
I feel embarrassed.	Blush and say nothing
I feel pleased.	
I feel annoyed.	
I feel angry.	Suddenly becoming silent in the midst of a conversation.
I'm worried about	
I feel hurt by what you said.	
I enjoy your sense of humor.	She's a wonderful person.
I respect her abilities and competence.	
I love her but I feel I shouldn't say so.	
I hurt too much to hear any more.	Shut up!
I feel angry with myself.	
I'm angry with you.	

Describing your feelings should not be an effort to coerce the other into changing. Rather, you report your inner state as just one more piece of information that is necessary if the two of you are to understand and improve your relationship.

You might describe what you perceive to be the other person's inner state in order to check whether you understand what they feel. That is, you test to see whether you have decoded their expressions or feelings accurately. You transform their expressions or feelings into a tentative description of their feelings. A good perception check conveys the message, "I want to understand your feelings -- is this the way you feel?"

Examples:

"I get the impression you are angry with me. Are you?" **NOT** "Why are you so angry with me?' (This is mind reading, not perception checking.

"Do you feel disappointed that nobody commented on your suggestions?"

"I'm not sure whether your expression means that my comment hurt your feelings, irritated or confused you."

Note, that a perception check describes the other person's feelings, and does not express disapproval or approval. It merely conveys, "This is how I understand your feelings. Am I accurate?"

Becoming effective at communicating with others takes consistent effort. Communicating effectively involves many component parts. It may seem overwhelming at first, but you can start by simply trying to be a better listener. As you spend time listening you will find that you have time to understand, to explore feelings and to get closer to those around you. You will also find that your own comments seem to come naturally from within. If you find that you are always worried about what you should say next then you probably just need to listen more. It is well worth the effort in terms of the contributions it will make to your interpersonal relationships and the quality of life in your family.

SKILL EXERCISES:

Listening with Understanding

The following examples provide an exercise in listening with understanding. For each item there are two responses. Pick the response that you feel indicates the person is really attempting to understand what is going on inside the person who made the statement.

1. "I've lived in this town all my life, and in the same house for seven years, but I don't know anyone. At school I just can't seem to make friends. I try to be friendly to the other kids, but I feel uncomfortable inside. I tell myself that I don't care; people aren't dependable; everyone is out for himself, and I don't want friends. Sometimes I think I really mean it."

a. "When you first meet someone, how do you act? What do you say to them?"
b. "These feelings have gone on so long that you're almost convinced. Is that right?"

2.. "I've gone steady four times and each time I've thought, 'Boy, this is the right thing!' None of them has ever been like this girl. She's the prettiest girl you ever saw. She's just beautiful."

a. "You're really enthusiastic about her, aren't you?"
b. "It seems odd that you've felt the same way every time."

3.. "Oh, I couldn't solve my problem without help. Ask me questions and tell me what to do -- because I wouldn't be able to. Honestly, I haven't got an idea how to begin. I don't want to. It's like at school. I can't do anything on my own; I just can't. I want to be told; then it wouldn't be my fault if things went wrong. And they would go wrong, because I don't know how to do anything. I feel so helpless."

a. "You feel that you just can't do anything without help?"
c. "It's not really that you can't go ahead on your own; it's just that you think you can't. You need to build up your self-confidence."

4.. "I graduated from school last month and I thought, 'Now what?' I looked for something to do and right there I ran into a snag. I can't make up my mind what I want to do. I thought I ought to go to college, and then I thought I'd be happier if I joined the Navy. I looked for a job and nothing stood out as a clear choice. Everything looked bad, and I felt...well, what's the use? Am I always going to be so confused that I won't be able to move in any direction?"

a. "You're confused and upset about it. This can happen, I guess, when we suddenly find ourselves having to make decisions after a long time in school, where even minor decisions were made for us."
b. "You're wondering why life seems to be this way?"

5.. (Handicapped girl) "I can't do any of the things my sister does. I can't dance or ride horses or date boys. I look at Charlene, and I wish I were her. You can't know the feelings I get deep inside me. I want to be able to have pretty clothes like hers and to go out and have a good time. It makes me sick inside. She can't help it, she was born that way. And I can't help it because I was born this way. But I get this feeling. I love my sister, really I do. But, I just cry and cry until I am sick. I want the things other girls have. I can't help it; I'm only human. I know it's a sin to feel as I do, but she has everything and I have nothing."

a. "Since you realize that you aren't going to be able to do many of the things your sister does, aren't there some other things you'd like to do?"

c. "In other words, you feel jealous of your sister because you can't compete with her and you feel guilty about your envy because you love your sister, too."

In looking at these statements, it is possible to learn how to do a better job of responding to feelings.

Response 1a seems overly probing, while response 1b shows a desire to understand feelings.

Response 2a is understanding. No attempt is made to prejudge the situation. Response 2b shows evidence that a negative judgement has been made about the other person's past actions or feelings. It does not show much desire to understand present feelings.

By reflecting feelings that have been expressed, response 3a is likely to encourage further communication. The person responding in 3b offers advice instead of trying to better understand the girl's feelings.

Response 41, by offering a reason for the individual's feelings, may shut off further communication. Response 4b, though short, encourages the individual to keep thinking and talking about his concerns.

The person responding in 5a is apparently trying to shift the tone of the interview from negative to positive. Toward the end of the interview, such an approach might be justified, but if done earlier in the interview, the interviewer may block further expression of the girl's feelings, and may be blocking his full understanding of the problem. Response 5b by attempting to restate accurately what is being said and felt, shows a desire to understand and promote further communication.

Response Style Exercise

In this exercise a series of case statements are presented. Each statement is an expression by a person about an aspect of the situation he faces. Little or no information is given you about the nature of the person speaking. Following each statement is a series of five possible responses. Select the statement that seems to fit the approach that you think you might be most likely to use. If you want to take the exercise even further, find someone who will role play with you and expand on the initial statement. Practice expanding on the response that you have selected and see where it will take you.

CASE #1; "I tell you I hate my father. I hate him! I hate him! I hate him! I hate him! and there's no reason for it. He is a religious man - a good and righteous man. He has never laid a hand on me - but I have this terrific feeling against him - and it makes me feel so terrible because - there is no reason for it. It's a sin to hate your father - especially if you don't have any real reason for it. I...it worries me."

1. I don't blame you for feeling guilty about hating him, especially since you can't figure out what he has done to make you hate him. Then, too, even though you see only your hatred of him, I bet that underneath you have some love for him, and this plays a part in your feelings of guilt.
2. A while ago I felt the same way, but I hated my mother. I guess lots of people do. I just avoided her for a while until things settled down, and things are fine now.
3. That's really strange that you feel that way. You should get things straightened out. A good relationship with your father is a great thing.
4. You are worried that you hate your father without reason and yet you feel bad about hating him.
5. What's your father like? You say he's never hit you, but maybe he has not let you do a number of things you wanted to do. What do you think?

CASE # 2: "I have the queerest feeling. Whenever anything good happens to me - I just can't believe it. I act as though it never happened. And it worries me. I wanted a date with Myrtle - and I stood around for weeks before I got up enough courage to ask her for a date, and she said "yes" - and I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it so much that I couldn't keep the date now.

1. You've got to get with it and get a more realistic idea about women. They are human, too, you know, and they want dates just as much as you do.
2. It just doesn't seem real when something good happens to you?

3. You have probably denied to yourself so strongly that anything good could happen to you that when it does it seems unreal.

4. Maybe these feelings of unreality are connected with a particular area of your life. What do you mean when you say, "Whenever anything good happens to me?"

5. It's not a big thing. Lots of people have the same kinds of feelings. You'll snap out of it.

CASE # 3: "I'm determined to get good grades. I am not afraid of hard work. I am not afraid to take a few hard knocks, if I can see my goal out there in front. And I'm not above climbing over a few people who get in my way because this means a lot to me. I can't be satisfied with just mediocre grades. No, I want to be somebody."

1. You see yourself as really ambitious person, is that it?

2. You just have to be out on top, no matter what you may do to others.

3. Why do you feel that it's so important to get good grades?

4. Why don't you take some tests to determine what courses you'd do best in? It might be a big help to you, although I bet that with your drive you could do well in most fields.

5. Determination can be a real asset to anyone. Are you really sure, though, that you mean it when you say you're not against climbing over those who get in your way? Couldn't that be a problem?

CASE # 4: "I'm afraid to be alone. I really am. I'm afraid I'll kill myself, and I don't want to, but I get so depressed. I get caught in a terrific clutch of fear -- it's unreal, but it's there. And I get so anxious I could scream. I want to get outside and I'm afraid to go out in case I run in front of a car -- and I'm afraid to stay in -- I'm afraid of myself -- I'm afraid to go to the doctor to get an examination. I'm afraid he'll tell me its cancer. My mother had it. My grandmother, my aunt. I've lived with it all my life. And when this first came up...see, I break out in a sweat just talking about it. I just can't talk to my father. Is there any help!"

1. Aside from your fear, have you any symptoms of cancer?

2. This terrific fear just never lets you alone?

3. If you have any reason at all to think that you might have Cancer, you really should try to control your fear enough to have a medical examination. It's stupid to worry if there's no reason, and you shouldn't waste time if you do have cancer.

4. Whenever you get that scared, why don't you tell me? I'm not saying that I'll be of any help, but maybe you'll feel better if you talk to someone.

5. You feel that you might have cancer because so many people in your family had it, and you're letting that fear creep into every aspect of your life.

CASE #5: "I tell you I am in a fix! I'm in love with a really great girl -- and she loves me. I'm sure of that. But I'm not good enough for her. I can't ask her to marry me. I've got a criminal record. She doesn't know about it, but I know it'll come out some day. No, I couldn't marry and have children. I've got a record and that proves to the world that I'm no good."

1. Well, it would be unfair to her to marry and to discover about your past later. You have to tell her about it now.

2. You feel afraid to face her with your record because she might break up with you and you just couldn't stand that.

3. Why are you so sure that she wouldn't be able to accept you if she knew about your past?

4. Possibly if you could have her talk to a friend, maybe they could lead her to see that your past is your past and does not necessarily mean that you couldn't have a happy future together.

5. You see yourself as not good enough for her without a doubt?

Intentions Underlying Responses

In exploring the intentions underlying the responses in the proceeding exercise, we will refer to the person with the problem as the "sender" and the person giving the responses as the "receiver". There are five underlying intentions:

EVALUATIVE (E): A response that indicates the receiver has made a judgement of relative goodness, appropriateness, effectiveness, or rightness of the sender's problem. The receiver has in some way implied that the sender might or ought to do.

INTERPRETATIVE (I): A response that indicates the receiver's intent is to teach, to tell the sender what his problem means, how the sender really feels about the situation. The receiver has either obviously or subtly implied that the person with the problem might or ought to think.

SUPPORTIVE (S): A response that indicates the receiver's intent is to reassure, to pacify, and to reduce the sender's intensity of feeling. The receiver has in some way implied that the sender need not feel as he does.

PROBING (P): A response that indicates the receiver's intent is to seek further information, provoke further discussion along a certain line, question the sender. The receiver has in some way implied that the sender ought or might profitably develop or discuss a point further.

UNDERSTANDING (U): A response that indicates the receiver's intent is to respond only to ask the sender whether the receiver correctly understands what the sender is saying, how the sender feels about the problem, and how the sender sees the problem.

The responses presented to these cases are examples of these underlying intentions. First, see if you can identify which intention is represented by each of the responses. Then look at the chart below and see how accurate your identification was. See if the responses that you chose as being most like what you might say are predominantly of one intention or another.

There are times to evaluate. There are times to be interpretive or supportive. There are times to probe. But we are best able to help our children and those we care about the most if we first choose to be understanding.

CASE	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
#1	I	S	E	U	P
#2	E	U	I	P	S
#3	U	I	P	S	E
#4	P	U	E	S	I
#5	E	I	P	S	U

EVALUATIONS OF PERSONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

What follows are efforts by two individuals to assess their own experiences and to evaluate their own communication skills:

What I have Learned about Communication Skills after Working with Troubled Teens.

After thinking about myself and others trying to talk to youth, my reaction is one of amazement and discouragement at how poorly I did. I felt that almost everything I had learned went right out the window when it came to practical situations. Now that I have had time to think about it, I realize that by being able to understand the mistakes I made I have a better chance of doing better in the future.

Let me summarize the mistakes I saw:

MAKING OPINION/QUESTIONS: A question beginning "Don't you think..." is almost always a statement of opinion and not a question at all. It is not open-ended and leaves no room for individual response. It is important to ask questions that are indeed questions.

THREATENING: I tried threatening -- sometimes blatantly, sometimes disguised, but invariably accomplishing nothing. If you must resort to threatening, you have not established trust.

NO TOLERANCE FOR SILENCE: I had no tolerance for silence and ended up filling the silences with endless babbling. This resulted in me doing all of the talking which is just what shouldn't happen. Silence can be constructive -- let the youth have time to think and react. You can't expect instant answers.

PROBLEM SOLVING BEFORE BUILDING TRUST: Coming up with ingenious bargains is futile if you haven't taken the time to build trust. When this happened, I got responses like: "You're trying to trick me...". Along with this goes problem solving before you have really discovered the problem. You can't assume you know the problem without listening to the youth. You will end up trying to solve a problem that really doesn't exist.

BEING DEFENSIVE: In many situations I became very defensive. I ended up spending time defending my behavior instead of focussing on the youth's problems.

VOICE QUALITY: Sometimes the tone of the voice can give a cold, insincere condescending effect. You must be aware of how your voice sounds because good intentions are irrelevant if you are perceived as being a fake.

WANDERING AROUND: It is silly to wander around asking "nicey nice" type questions and not focussing on the problem. One can establish trust and empathy without exchanging notes on favorite foods etc... Stick to the point.

ONE-WAY BARGAINING: A bargain is not a true bargain if one party is doing all the changing. Both teacher and student must share in the contract if it is to be a true bargain.

ASKING TOO MANY QUESTIONS AT ONCE: Asking two or three questions and making an opinion statement all at once will only confuse the youth. Ask only one question at a time.

APOLOGETIC: This was my biggest and most obvious mistake. If you owe the youth an apology for some reason, say you are sorry and that is that. It isn't necessary to degrade yourself and go on and on about it. This is merely focussing all the attention on you and is not getting to the youth's problem.

GUILT CREATION: Like threatening, if an adult must resort to this tactic, it shows they have not established any trust.

TONE,SPEED AND POSTURE: Try to match your voice tone, speed and posture with the youth's. Leaning forward will create a warmer, more relaxed atmosphere. Don't talk a hundred m.p.h.. Your posture and voice can help loosen up the atmosphere if you feel the youth is tense or uneasy.

FEELINGS: Be straight about your feelings. Don't try to pretend you never get mad or upset by anything. Be honest.

If I had to pick out the most important thing to remember about problem solving and communication skills it would be: You MUST build the trust before you can solve the problem. If you have empathy and can build trust, the problem can be solved -- even if you make some other mistakes. But you must have empathy and build trust first and foremost or everything else is futile.

Trials and Errors – A Communications Journal

This is the Journal of a young girl trying to become a more effective listener. In this journal she attempts to describe her efforts, her failures and her successes. Like her, you will only succeed eventually if you begin the process with trying to work at the skill. You will see comments in all capital letters with *** at the beginning and the end. These comments are Jane's thoughts and comments about what is going on.

A conversation between Jane and her Fiancé: (From A Tape)

Jane : "You are really quiet, did I do or say something that made you feel bad? "

Stan: "No! (long pause) Everything's just getting to me I guess."

Jane: "School pressure?"

Stan: "No! Not Exactly."

Jane: "You mean that being engaged is making you tense?"

Stan: "Yeah!"

Jane: (nervous laugh) "You wish you'd never met me?"

*** HERE I STARTED TO BECOME SCARED AND DEFENSIVE ***

Stan: "I'd better not answer that."

Jane: "You mean you DO wish you'd never met me?"

Stan: (after a very uncomfortable silence) "Well, yes in one way, I guess. No, in another way. "

*** HERE HE GETS ON THE DEFENSIVE AND SEEMS TO STAY THERE ***

Jane: "Yes, in what way? "

Stan: "Well, it's really complicating my life. I have problems I never had before, pressure, and I guess I'm feeling pretty scared. "

Jane: "And 'NO' in what way? "

*** HERE I GO BEING THE GRAND INQUISITOR. I'M FEELING DEFENSIVE AND HURT AND I THINK HE IS TOO. ***

Stan: "No, because I think I love you and I realize that you're right for me. "

Jane: "You know I'm right for you but sometimes you don't believe it?"

Stan: “Sometimes I just have to fight a lot of flack and doubts.”

Jane: “You're still having doubts?”

Stan: “Don't you ever have any?

Jane: “No, not really. I feel terrible that you're having doubts. I feel like you're disappointed in me or something. I feel like it's all my fault.”

Stan: “No, it's not all your fault. Your personality is just the way it is and mine is the way it is.”

Jane: “And never the twain shall meet?”

*** HERE I GO JUMPING FROM ONE TRAGIC CONCLUSION TO ANOTHER. I'M SO AFRAID HE IS GOING TO HURT ME THAT I WANT TO BEAT HIM TO IT. ***

Stan: “I don't know.”

Jane: “You mean you think we have "irreconcilable differences?"

Stan: “Well, sometimes I wonder if the way you are and the way I react to the way you are can fit together.”

Jane: “What do you mean the "way I am?"

Stan: “Well, when you do something that bugs me, I don't tell you, so you don't know you're doing something that bugs me.”

Jane: “What do I do that bugs you?”

*** QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS. I'M NOT EVEN GIVING HIM A CHANCE TO EXPLORE HIS OWN FEELINGS AND TO EXPRESS THEM. ***

Stan: “Oh, I don't know... I can't think of a specific example right now. Forget it. "

Jane: “I can't forget it. I don't want to be doing things that rub you the wrong way and never even know about it.”

Stan: “Now I don't know what to tell you. But, well, when Marsha asked if she could use some butter tonight and you said no -- it bugged her.” (Marsha is my roommate)

Jane: "I needed the butter for the cheesecake tomorrow."

*** HERE I AM BEING DEFENSIVE AGAIN ***

Stan: "I know. But you noticed how bugged she was. "

Jane: "Sure -- and soon as I noticed it I went and apologized for it and she forgave me. Can't you."

*** SOMETIMES MY DRAMA TRAINING COMES OUT AT THE WRONG TIME AND I START TO PLAY THE BIG MELODRAMA ***

Stan: "That's not what I mean at all."

Jane: "You think that I am too hard on Marsha."

Stan : 'Now stop and listen for a minute. I just used that as an example to show you how different it is. I mean, when you do something that irks Marsha, she tells you about it, you work things out, then everything's O.K. But with me, I never tell you, so you never notice that you're bugging me. "

Jane: "That makes me feel like you think I'm insensitive. "

Stan: "NO! How are you supposed to know if I don't tell you?"

*** IF I HAD GIVEN HIM A CHANCE EARLIER, I THINK HE WOULD HAVE TOLD ME EARLIER WITHOUT WASTING 2 HOURS ON MY DEFENSIVENESS. ***

Jane: "I just think I ought to be sensitive enough to realize how you feel. I would like you to tell me about it."

Stan: "Well, O.K. I'll tell you about last week."

*** HE TOLD ME OF AN INCIDENT THE WEEK BEFORE WHICH HAD BOTHERED HIM. I WAS TEASING HIM AND HE FELT I WAS "CUTTING HIM DOWN." AFTER THIS WE TALKED ABOUT IT AND HE FELT BETTER. ***

Another Conversation with Stan a Week Later:

Jane: "You look like something is bothering you. "

Stan: "NO, not really."

(10 minutes of trivial conversation)

Stan: “Is it always going to be like this?”

Jane: “Is it always going to be like what?”

Stan: “Are we always going to have this hard of a time deciding on every little picky detail? “

*** THIS IS SO DRAMATIC THAT I COULD HAVE REALLY BUILT IT INTO SOMETHING BIG WITHOUT FINDING OUT WHAT HE MEANT. ***

Jane: “You feel frustrated because every time we decide to do anything we're in a dilemma?”

*** NOW THAT WAS A GREAT REFLECTIVE STATEMENT. I HAD TO REALLY FIGHT MY DEFENSIVE TENDENCY TO SAY "ARE YOU ACCUSING ME OF BEING INDECISIVE?" FOR ONCE I LISTENED INSTEAD OF DEFENDING. ***

Stan: “Yeah! Neither one of us can ever decide so we just stand around and do nothing.”

Jane: “True, so what's to do.”

Stan: “Well, every time I ask you what your preference is you say you don't care and I don't know what to do.”

Jane: “So you feel like my not stating a preference really forces you to decide everything yourself.”

*** HE FELT OPEN ENOUGH TO STATE A PROBLEM BUT I ALMOST BECAME DEFENSIVE AGAIN. IT SEEMED LIKE AN ATTACK TO ME BUT I OVERCAME IT ENOUGH TO REFLECT BACK TO HIM. ***

"Stan: “Right. I mean, you must want one thing more than another, don't you?”

Jane: “No -- if I say I don't care, I really don't.”

Stan: “Really?”

Jane: “Yes -- when I'm with you, being with you is more important than what we are doing.”

Stan: "Well, I guess guys pay more attention to the activity because we are responsible for it. Do you really not care or are you just trying to be agreeable? "

Jane: "I really don't care -- do you want me to be more decisive?"

Stan: "Well, when you carefully consider every detail of a minor decision, it isn't worth all the effort I guess."

Jane: "You think I'm wishy-washy. "

*** OOPS. A BIT DEFENSIVE AGAIN. ***

Stan: "Oh, come on now, That is not what I said."

Jane: "Well, what I mean really is that if you want me to make an arbitrary decision now and then I will."

Stan: "No, if you really don't care, just tell me and I'll take that at face value. O.K.?"

Jane: "O.K.

A Conversation between Jane and Her Roommate Mary:

Mary: "Jane, can I talk to you for a few minutes?"

Jane: "Sure - what can I do for you?"

Mary: "Oh, I don't really know Ä I just never get to see you any more. I really miss talking to you since you got engaged."

Jane: "I know -- I really miss it, too -- I really feel out of it sometimes."

Mary: "Talking to anyone else is just not the same because they all laugh at me when I talk about Steve. They make me feel really silly when I talk about him because I guess there is really nothing to talk about. I mean, nothing is really happening."

Jane: "So most of what you're talking about is kind of daydreaming, and when someone else laughs at your personal daydreams you feel really shot down."

*** I WAS REALLY JUMPING AHEAD HERE, BUT WE ARE VERY CLOSE AND I COULD SENSE WHAT WAS HAPPENING. ***

Mary: "Boy, is that ever the truth. You know I feel silly enough just thinking thoughts about what I would like to see my relationship with Steve be, but when I share it and someone laughs, I really feel like a first class fool."

Jane: "You mean you feel silly and over-anxious anyway, but when some one else supports that view you feel all the worse and feel really dumb."

Mary: "Yeah... I guess I'm just frustrated over the whole relationship with Steve Ä you know, it's a sensitive subject, but, oh well, I want to talk about it, but then again I feel awful talking about it. You're the only one I can talk to, but since you got engaged, I don't know if I really can talk to you anymore."

*** I COULD TELL HERE THAT MARSHA'S FEELING SILLY ABOUT TALKING ABOUT STEVE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH MY BEING ENGAGED, BUT I WASN'T QUITE SURE WHAT.

Jane: "Well Mary, I'm home every evening, I mean any time...."

Mary: "Oh, I know, but my little problems are so trivial -- Oh well."

*** I SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN THE CLUE FROM THIS STATEMENT "MY LITTLE PROBLEMS ARE SO TRIVIAL" BUT I TRIED TO COMFORT HER INSTEAD OF PAYING ATTENTION TO THE OBVIOUS CLUE. ***

Jane: "No, if you want to talk about it, I want to listen."

Mary: "What's the deal? You're suddenly turning into listener of the year Ä man, I feel like I've got a personal counselor. I've talked more to you this semester than ever before."

Jane: "Now, it's my turn to feel silly. I'm taking a class in communications and all of a sudden, I'm beginning to realize that talking is more important than I thought."

Mary: "So I'm just a class project."

Jane: "Heavens, no. I'm just learning what do, I guess. I confess that I've been practicing on you, but you know I care about you."

Mary: "Oh listen -- you just keep right on practicing -- it's the greatest thing -- thinking someone wants to listen, only sometimes I feel silly talking to you."

*** 3RD TIME FOR THE SAME CLUE.... LIGHT BEGINS TO DAWN! ***

Jane: "Since I got engaged?"

Mary: "Yeah, I guess you're in kind of a different realm."

Jane: "Since I got engaged, you feel silly because you think I don't relate to your dating experiences anymore. "

*** I FINALLY CAUGHT ON ***

Mary: "Yeah, I guess that's it. I don't know, I never really sorted it out quite like this before. You know -- you are dealing with the "real thing" and I'm just fiddling around with the old dating game. "

Jane: "Well, I know that when I was Ruth's roommate and when she got engaged, I hardly ever talked to her about my dates, because it seemed like nothing important ever happened to me while here she was talking about the big important decisions of life."

*** I THINK THAT SOME SELF-DISCLOSURE HELPED A LOT HERE. ***

Mary: "That's what I mean. But I know you and Ruth are really close -- so what happened?"

Jane: "Oh, I guess I found out that she is really interested and you know, I'm always willing to talk about myself if someone will listen. I found out she was still interested in me."

Mary: "Well, gee -- maybe now that I know you're interested I won't feel so dumb."

What I learned from this experience: (Jane)

1. I often feel frustrated because I feel myself doing the wrong thing.
2. It has really helped my relationship with my fiancé and my roommate. Not that they have any fewer problems to discuss, but I'm beginning to overcome my tendency to become defensive and start making everything worse by focusing on my hurt feelings.
3. My roommate accused me of being "listener of the year" this semester. But what she meant, I think, is that she saw in me a new willingness to listen in order to "practice." I never realized how adept I had become at giving her the "busy signal" when she wanted to talk before.
4. Amazingly enough, people are beginning to listen to me more.

COMPETITION AND COOPERATION:
Growth or Decay

BASIC VALUES:

Many worthwhile values have been perceived to be inherent in sports participation, yet they are not accessible automatically to everyone who participates.

There are values that are not only worthwhile to pursue but need to be made available and accessible to more youth. It's not a matter of saturating a community with organized sports leagues or merely upgrading physical education programs in the schools. Many youngsters, including many who participate do not really benefit from sports for a variety of reasons but at least in part because of the "win-at-all costs" concepts prevalent today. Participation in sports should be a vehicle for all-around personal growth and the development of a positive self-image.

For participation in sports to be a growth experience the concept of “winning must be put into its proper perspective. There are winners and there are "winners". Everyone needs to "win" sometimes if he or she is to gain satisfaction from any sport. Winning can however, be broadened to include progress on many levels. Each individual can learn to set their own personal goals and define "winning" in their own personal way. Coaching styles should be directed in such a way as to develop the skills and attitudes that help an individual to feel in charge of their own life and to feel like a winner. An approach is needed which provides the essential experiences which not only make sports values more accessible, but provides the motivation to participate in the sport, learn the necessary skills, and develop the self-esteem necessary to approach life with confidence -- and that's what it's all about.

An important issue has to do with how children perceive themselves. If they have a very weak perception of the power they have over their life, or believe that they are dependent people, at the whims of their environment, then we need to strengthen and encourage the perception that they can affect many things in their life through the efforts which they put forth. By trying, by thinking, by extending their best effort, they can affect what happens to them in their life.

If my perception is, "I can't do anything,": then my attitude is "why try?" and my motivation is zero and all the capabilities in the world, all the skills in the world, will be useless.

On the other hand, if my perception is "I can do something," then my attitude is to try and my motivation is high and even if I don't have the skills or capabilities, as long as the perception stays alive I will innovate, try, work and ultimately develop the capabilities I need to achieve.

Sports programs can provide an important ingredient in developing an environment that cultivates three basic perceptions:

1. I am a capable person who can do things for myself.
2. I am an important, contributing part of things greater than myself.
3. I have the power to influence what happens to me in my life.

Of course this means that the adults who work in this environment must understand these perceptions and how they are developed. In creating this environment you must make sure that youth are involved because they want to be. They need to be appreciated for themselves and taken seriously as a person. They need to be listened to. There has to be an effort made to make sure youth are not asked for more than they have been prepared to deliver. Youth need to be perceived as having a significant role to play in life and a major purpose of the program is that they will achieve a realization of that purpose if they stay with the program. Everyone (youth, leaders, and parents) needs to support one another.

Unfortunately, there are many who work with competitive sports programs who are not trained or who do not believe in the principles that will help youth to grow and develop. Coaches need to have technical expertise in the sport and work at the application of their expertise according to effective principles of teaching sports skills, teamwork and individual growth and development. Coaches need to be effective counselors. They need to be dedicated to the idea of helping each individual to achieve on what ever level each is capable of through the utilization of physical skill instruction and the application of principles pertaining to the development of positive perceptions and positive self-image.

Children who have the greatest possibilities for top athletic performance and in life itself are those whose parents pay particular attention to the child's upbringing (in all aspects) during the first seven years. Athletic performance, as well as success in life therefore, begins the day the child is born. As early as six months to two years children can be provided with activity and recreation experiences such as a beginning water adjustment and learning to swim. Not with the purpose in mind of aiming at future Olympic competition but as an ideal form of fun, relaxation and physical conditioning throughout life.

If a youth is interested, he or she may be encouraged to get involved in a competitive experience. Sports programs should take into consideration all those who desire or might desire to begin preparation for "making the team" by fostering and working with community programs which teach basic athletic skills at all levels.

Ideally, a child develops his or her athletic ability while progressing up through various levels of advancement. Adequately skilled staff at all levels give students every opportunity for making the team. We want to encourage the type of continuity necessary to develop excellence through a comprehensive and progressive program.

A child's aspirations should be directed toward certain goals in life. Whatever he or she plans to be "when he or she grows up", experiences along the way should encourage the striving for excellence (not necessarily perfection) - never mediocrity. Setting the goal for participation on a competitive team may open up the way for a valuable learning experience, developing desirable attitudes; learning new skills; developing dedication, self-discipline, self-denial, and physical fitness, attributes lacking in many of this nation's youth and adults alike.

Over the long haul, it's striving for excellence that counts. Teachers and coaches who are most concerned about personal development - the development of desirable attitudes, and winning as a by-product (in that order) - teach, develop and enrich the youngster. He learns the price he must pay in hard work, determination, and frustration, whether he or she becomes a champion or competes for personal pleasure. The experience youngsters have will condition their mind, as well as their body for a more positive existence. Teachers and coaches who are sensitive to this overall philosophy and who can relate to youngsters, especially ages twelve and under where guidance, empathy and genuine love are of primary importance, are worth their weight in gold (and most assuredly would not be paid what they are worth).

An athlete conditions his or her body physiologically for greater physical efforts by progressively increasing the physical stress, combined with proper habits of nutrition, sleep, etc.. As the body adapts to the stress of short, easy workouts, the athlete increases the amount of stress by doing longer, harder workouts. He must also condition himself psychologically in a similar manner.

In the crucial transition period of increasing competitive drive, the child needs a compassionate coach who displays more than the ability to be well organized and a thorough knowledge of the sport, important as these factors are in the effective coach. A coach should not be merely be ambitious and able to get good results but also know how to handle and understand children.

A coach working with children during their formative years can do a great deal to develop desirable or undesirable attitudes. The children under his guidance unconsciously adopt the attitudes the coach displays. This applies not only during workout sessions and meets and other team functions, but also in his personal relationship with each individual youth.

Most athletes develop a strong loyalty to their coach and have confidence in his ability. It is important, therefore, that he has this ability, but also that he has a conviction of the value and dignity of the individual. Justified confidence is the cornerstone of any program. An over-critical parent who questions the coach's ability and methods can undermine this confidence. A coach who must constantly be protecting himself from the criticism of his team's parents is in danger of losing much of his capacity to coach effectively. Coaches make errors in judgement just as we all do; compassion and understanding on the part of the parents is a necessary prerequisite for a successful program. Parents must clearly understand that the pressure on coaches to "win-at-all-costs" comes from parents. In working with youth in the community or in organized school athletic programs, the growth and development of each individual child **MUST** be more important to everyone concerned than the numbers on any scoreboard.

The Objectives of Sport

1. To provide opportunities for social and emotional development.
2. To furnish a wholesome and worthwhile physical and recreational outlet.
3. To provide opportunities to learn sportsmanship and develop awareness of team cooperation.
4. To provide an educational environment.
5. To provide opportunities to learn good health habits.
6. To provide training and competition that will aid in the development of worthwhile attitudes.
7. To provide a wide base of experience for all and not just the highly skilled.
8. To provide opportunities for developing good working habits and self-evaluation.

These objectives are met by having properly supervised and organized practices and competitive experiences with opportunity for team functions not limited just to competition. A coach must be able to develop the proper types of practices and competitive experiences that correspond to the level, skill, and scope of achievement of the various ages and abilities on the team or within an individual's ability. A Coach needs to be willing to teach team members to set goals in other aspects of their life such as school and establishing good health habits. Activities need to be organized in such a way as to maximize participation in competently developed practices and competitive opportunities, with tensions minimized and development within the scope and good sequential development of all team members.

Nowhere in the list of objectives, is the development of national champions or a winning team mentioned. Mediocrity should be no one's goal - everyone should strive for excellence. However, the real winner in sports is often not the winner of the race, for he or she may be achieving that goal at the cost of failure to attain some of the other goals available in such a program, which may be more important. It must always be kept in the forefront of one's mind that the only justification of any sports program is that it exists for the benefit of the child.

The question of children's readiness for competition has to be answered on an individual basis. Even more, it depends on the wisdom of parents and coaches to make competitive sports ready for children. I cannot think that the agony of one child's defeat can be the thrill of another's victory, or that winning is the only reward and losing is punishment. Children and psychologists know this to be untrue. The drive to tackle physical barriers and, later, to compare one's ability with others is a natural part of a child's development, vital in forming feelings of competence and a secure self-identity. All are key ingredients for competitiveness and self-motivation in sports--and doesn't have to come at someone else's expense. Learning to win and to lose are parts of the same process.

Parents and coaches need to be able to conduct a dialogue helping to develop guidelines to make informed choices -- not whether competitive sports are good or bad, but what kinds of sports, under what circumstances, help or hinder what types of personal growth in which specific children. This is why it is so important to take time to know and understand the child and to design an approach to that individual when it comes to teaching and training for a particular sport. It is hard to debate that winning is important, but children are more important.

In 1979 two groups, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education and the American Academy of Pediatrics endorsed a Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

Each child should have:

1. The right to participate in sports.
2. The right to participate at a level commensurate with their maturity and ability.
3. The right to have qualified adult leadership.
4. The right to play as a child and not as an adult.
5. The right to share in the leadership and decision making of their sports participation.
6. The right to participate in safe and healthy environments.

7. The right to proper preparation for participation in sports.
8. The right to an equal opportunity to strive for success.
9. The right to be treated with dignity.
10. The right to have fun in Sports.

Adults can make it impossible for young people to learn how to cooperate by developing a climate of total competition. Young people will face enough competition in their life. In fact, adults should work to control some of the intense competition that young people may face. Children under the age of 12 should not be forced to deal with a "win at all costs" philosophy in any organized competitive team sport. Sports programs for youth need to adhere to the following rules:

1. Anyone who wants to play can play.
2. Each participant plays an equal amount of time.
3. No awards are given for winning a game but for:
   Participation, Meeting personal or team goals, and Effort

Young people need good recreation programs. They do not need to deal with the pressures of winning in order to build the ego of the coach, parents, or youth leaders. During middle or late adolescence they are much better able to deal with that type of pressure. But if they are not prepared for it by being allowed to develop free of that intense pressure, severe personality deterioration can occur.

This same problem occurs in classrooms where teachers assign grades through the use of a normal curve. There is absolutely no justification for such a practice and parents should see to it that such practices halt. Schools should use a system of criterion referenced grading. Here the criteria for receiving a certain grade are specified at the beginning of the course. They should be challenging, but if every student meets the criteria for an "A" grade then every student in the course should receive an "A" grade. To just say that only 10% may receive an "A" and 10% must fail is the height of educational stupidity.

MYTHS ABOUT COMPETITION.

Adults must make sure that they do not use competition as the sole method of motivating young people. Youth should not be measured by or compared to others. Each young person should be taught to measure their own progress based on the goals that they have set for themselves. It is very easy to fall into the trap of using competition to motivate. There are even fairly well developed sets of myths that support this approach.

MYTH 1: Our society is highly competitive and children must be taught to succeed in a "survival of the fittest" world.

Many advocates of competition insist that schools and homes must emphasize a dog-eat-dog theory of survival in the occupational world. To be better than the Joneses is the deepest desire of such individuals. Yet the truth is that the vast majority of human interaction, in our society as well as in all other societies, is not competitive, but cooperative. We are a social species. Cooperation is a biological necessity for humans. Without cooperation, no group, no family, no organization would be able to exist. Even in fighting wars and conducting competitive activities, there are vast underpinnings of cooperative agreements concerning how the competition or conflict will be conducted and the ways in which antagonists can express their hostility toward each other. There can be no competition without underlying cooperation. A study of social psychology suggests that competition is a very, very small part of interacting with other individuals in our society and probably not a very important type of human interaction.

MYTH 2: Achievement, success, outstanding performance, superhuman effort, the rise of the great leader, drive, ambition, and motivation depend upon competing with others.

The appeal of this myth to persons who wish to see greatness is overwhelming. Where is the great person who will set the world straight and show us a better way of life? The truth is, however that higher achievement does not take place within an environment of forced competition. Performance can actually go down under competitive goal structures, and a person who is superior in one situation may be markedly inferior in another. The use of competition will, under most conditions, decrease the quality of a person's work and will in no way determine who is the best person to achieve under a variety of conditions. Competitive motivation interferes with one's capacity for the adaptive problem solving necessary in dealing with complex issues with others. The only children who are motivated by competition are those who believe they have a good chance of winning. Persons do not exert effort to achieve the impossible. Competition is threatening and discouraging to those who believe they cannot win, and many children will withdraw psychologically or physically or only half type in competitive situations. Children are motivated when a goal is desirable, possible, challenging, concrete, and requires positive interaction with others. A competitive goal structure does not affect any of those variables in a positive way unless the child believes he has an equal chance of winning. The whole area of intrinsic motivation shows that motivation does not depend upon competition. Even in extrinsic motivation situations, competition will exist only when there is a limited amount of the reinforcer (it cannot be shared with everyone), and when every child believes he has a chance to win.

As children grow, parents need to foster and encourage the child's ability to deal with others in a cooperative way. Having an appropriate set of rules to follow and being helped to gain effective communication skills are two very important component parts of this process. An additional element has to do with the feelings of acceptance and the closeness as well as the emotional relationship that exists between parents and children. Children must be helped to feel accepted without conditions by both parents.

There is probably no set of skills more important to a human being than the skills of cooperative interaction. The vast majority of human interaction is cooperative in nature. Without cooperation among individuals, no group, family, organization, or school would be able to exist. Without high levels of cooperation there would be no coordination of behavior. No two individuals could communicate with each other or interact without cooperating to form a common language and agreed upon forms for behavior. Occupations, education, exchange of goods and services, or any other type of coordinated human action would not exist without cooperation. Cooperation is the most important and most basic form of human interaction and the skills of cooperating successfully are some of the most important skills a person needs to master.

Competition in various forms is also an integral part of our lives, and yet most do not fully understand the positive and negative consequences of it. We have for too long ignored some of the destructive elements of competition and have also failed to teach the necessary skills for effective cooperation.

Much current research seems to indicate that certain forms of competition in current vogue in sports, classrooms and in the family have a tendency to create environments which are destructive. Perhaps one of the reasons why competition is overused and even has destructive results when used appropriately is because children are not taught effective cooperation skills.

Children must feel good enough about themselves to be able to decide whether or not they want to compete in a given situation. Many feel that they have no choice and that in order to be accepted, or to be a "winner" they must compete. They need to be able to see participation as a value in itself and have the communication skills necessary to be able to participate in an effective way.

How Parents can Enhance the Development of Cooperation

1. Give children a part in planning. Let them decide on the distribution of chores and the penalties for not following through.
2. Be specific. Make sure everyone knows exactly what is expected of him or her and when. A written chart seems to work best, at least at the start.

3. Be generous with praise. Nothing encourages effort more than sincere appreciation.
4. Be flexible. If a child makes a team and practice gets him home late for a while, help to arrange an equitable job swap among siblings. Many unexpected things may come up that make keeping an exact schedule difficult. If you are understanding (and yet firm), you are more likely to gain like treatment when your schedule requires extra help.
5. Answer all questions clearly and cheerfully, no matter how obvious the answers may seem to you. Don't ever say anything disparaging or ask, "Can't you figure that out for yourself?" Or you might say "I'd like you to try to find that answer. Would you like me to help you do that?"
6. Don't take over. It really punctures a child's morale to see that you don't think he or she can manage a task and they will be much less likely to want to try again.
7. Keep the lines of communication open. Meet together at specified times to discuss how things are going, what needs change or improvement.
8. Keep your values straight. Remember that cooperation is the goal, not perfection. An occasional lapse in an overall pattern of responsible behavior is best forgiven and forgotten. We all sometimes put off our chores.
9. Relax. If you have been a meticulous housekeeper and a neatnik, the odds are against your children measuring up to your standards. That doesn't mean you must tolerate sloppiness, but it does mean that everyone will be happier and you will gain a lot more time for yourself if you don't throw a fit every time things are not done to your exact specifications. Kids can be absolutely great, but they are still kids, and we can't expect them to perform like miniature adults. Don't come unglued at every spill or accident, it will make your children more nervous and less likely to want to cooperate. Remember this advice given by one mother to another who complained about her son not making his bed every day: "Why not ask him to close the door so that you won't notice?"
10. Be generous with praise. Be generous with honest sincere praise. IF NO ONE NOTICES, WHY BOTHER!

ATHLETIC COACHING: CREATING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

by John William Mirocha

During my first two and half years of High School coaching I was convinced that the Vince Lombardi school of coaching football was the only successful method. To produce an excellently conditioned, disciplined, and motivated team, I thought one had to be authoritarian and brutal. Jerry Kramer, in his book, Instant Replay, stated that Vince Lombardi "Made football players of men and men of football players." To me, that statement said that there was something about Lombardi's coaching which brought the most out of his players; personal maturity and athletic prowess. The coaches I have been associated with, both as a player and as a coach, who used this particular method produced winning teams, but I couldn't see any changes in the athletes' personalities. Players who were bigoted remained bigoted. Selfish, egotistical or immature athletes remained as they were or sometimes got worse but seldom if ever changed for the better. Athletic prowess was gained; the teams won their games but personalities stayed the same or deteriorated; there was little or no positive growth in attitudes, beliefs or personal characteristics. The athletes did experience a feeling of togetherness. I think mainly because of the coercion which they all experienced together and the common fear of punishment if they didn't win. For illustrative purposes only, I would compare this type of togetherness to that experienced by suppressed minorities, being forced to feel a part of the group for the cumulative advantages and solidarity offered by the group--more or less as a defensive measure.

As a result of my observations doubts clouded my Lombardian coaching style. I started looking at the kids as people not as trainable horses. I listened more, and analyzed the affect generated by my presence and the learning structure which I had created. I started paying attention to what was happening to the athletes in terms of personal growth as well as athletic ability. I started making changes based on outcomes which I could logically predict. The first thing I did was to break the role relationship which generally develops between coach and players, which hamper open communication. (From my experiences, communication in Lombardian structures is characterized by a "one way" communication, directed to the players from the coaches, with little room for feedback, thus inhibiting a two way information flow between players and coaches.) With much hard work the old role relationships were dismantled, trust was developed, communication lines were opened. This was evidenced to me by the verbal and non-verbal interaction between the athletes and myself. Formal conversations became informal, personal exchanges. Eye contact became meaningful, and smiles and other non-verbal communications became more prevalent over time.

Sport as a subset of larger society, teaches athletes to behave in certain ways, and these ways are used by these individuals in later life to meet similar situations. More specifically, athletes are taught to meet situations in particular ways. Example: Bill is taught to meet pressure with pressure in his defensive tackle position. later in life, Bill meets pressure with pressure at the office, instead of rational thinking. The attitudes are the key. Attitudes and beliefs are learned within a coaching, learning, teaching environment which individuals keep with them in whole or part of their lives.

It is important to establish coaching methods, which will satisfy parents and children, and refrain from teaching attitudes, which will be nonproductive or destructive when, transferred to non-athletic situations. Coaches should create situations where open communication, joint decision making, and cooperation in human interactions, can be learned and experienced. There are four basic relationship statements:

1. Individual and personal growth lead to team growth.
2. Team growth can in turn lead to individual growth.
3. Individual growth can be equated with team growth.
4. Team growth can not necessarily be equated with individual growth.

I want to allow for the greatest amount of individual personal growth. My goal is to structure coaching in such a way to allow for possibilities of growth and not to place arbitrary limits on that growth. There are three basic ground rules, which provide a structure within which the team and coaches as a group can operate. These basic rules are: open communication, joint decision making, and cooperation. Following these three basic rules provides for growth in three particular areas of group and individual growth.

AREA I: Cooperation vs. Competition with members of the same team. Often two athletes who are competing with each other for the same position close communication lines between themselves to give themselves an advantage. They withhold information and insights from one another. By making information available to all, and stressing cooperativeness, ALL involved will be better informed, and therefore better prepared to play. Even less able players may learn techniques or ideas, which will benefit others if openly shared.

AREA II: Self-instilled self-discipline vs. imposed discipline. Nothing hampers communication more than having one person tell everyone what to do. One way communication is demeaning and deprives those who lack knowledge of how to govern themselves of the opportunity to learn to do it on their own.

If information is open to all, and cooperation is to prevail, it follows that knowledge, which is present in the group, should be shared. Having athletes capable of self-motivation is a rare experience. Each person is most capable of designing his own self-disciplining strategy, if he has the necessary skills of introspection and communication. As athletes learn to motivate themselves, they also gain information, which will help them interpersonally with others. Athletes need an opportunity to work with others. They need to work together to work out goals and how they will attain them.

AREA III: Non-competitiveness vs. competitiveness with opposing teams. This is the "beat the concept" idea. In individual sports athletes compete primarily against a record, a weight, or a time. I structure coaching so that athletes compete against an idea or concept, rather than another individual. When practicing for an upcoming game stress winning as a culmination of efforts to achieve excellence. At a team define how "excellent" you want to be

Consider the other team as something to help achieve our goals, not as an opponent to be competed against. Our purpose is not to compete with others but to reach our goal. If all teams held the same philosophy, you would see teams trying to attain their goals of excellence without trying to beat their opponents, eliminating "grudge matches."

I never praise a team for winning a game. Winning is reinforcing in itself. I praise the team for working together, accomplishing their goals and achieving excellence. Football becomes an art of preparation, execution, and accomplishment, rather than a game of violence, played by men trying to destroy each other, to win at all costs..

The core process is goal setting. Goal setting consists of establishing specific individual and group goals of excellence and developing means of attaining these goals. A typically structured week of team meetings would be as follows:

WEEKEND: Each player analyzes his personal failures and accomplishments. He sets his personal goals for the following week. These goals may start of somewhat vague but they will become more specific during the week, as other players help them to verbalize.

MONDAY: Each player discusses his thoughts from the weekend with two other players. Coaches are included in the process. Players analyze their strengths and weaknesses together. A list of things to work on during the week is compiled, showing a priority listing of things which need toe most work by the whole team.

TUESDAY: The team formulates a practice schedule for the rest of the week, according to the strengths and weaknesses compiled on Monday. Part of the job of the coach is to construct practice sessions during the week based on the goals developed by the team on Monday. Meetings may be held before, during, or after practice, depending upon the need.

FRIDAY: Game day. During the game the coach is to be a consultant. The decision making process is totally in the hands of the team members.

With this type of coaching system, team members learn how to think, how to make decisions and how to set and reach specific goals.

CLOSING THOUGHTS.

Rudyard Kipling observed that it was a rare man who can treat winning and losing as the same. But we can try harder than we are. After losing a 7-6, 7-6 match to Poland's Wojtek Fibak in a recent tennis tournament, Vitas Gerulaitis of the U.S. refused the traditional handshake, prompting Fibak to charge, "Young American sportsmen don't behave like gentleman or even humans. They act like machines that have to win every time. They never learned how to lose."

By changing our definition of winning we create a situation where each individual is in charge of his or her own success rather than being at the mercy of others. Competition can be exciting, worthwhile and can create an opportunity to learn and grow depending upon the kind of structure and setting in which it occurs and whether individuals all are there because they have freely chosen to do so.

HELPFUL BOOKS:

Reaching Out - Interpersonal Effectiveness and Self-Actualization
David W. Johnson, Prentice Hall
Learning Together and Alone - Cooperation, Competition, and Individualization
David W. & Roger T. Johnson, Prentice Hall
Joining Together - Group Theory and Group Skills
David W. & Frank P. Johnson, Prentice Hall

DISCIPLINE:
A Structure for Growth

WHAT IS DISCIPLINE

A commonly accepted definition of discipline has more to do with punishment than discipline. Discipline should have to do with the process of teaching responsibility and moving children from depending upon their parents to provide accountability and discipline to a point where the only discipline that is necessary is self-discipline.

For example: A young man felt ill and came home from school an hour early. His parents were not home and he merely went to his room and went to sleep. A week later the school called and reported the absence to the parents. The father felt that it was his duty to take some action. The boy had no say in the matter and could not even remember the exact day that he had missed school. Punishment was given out, the youth was grounded for a week and deprived from the use of the car for two weeks. In the youth's eyes he was punished for no reason. It was just punishment. No growth took place. No behavior was changed, no new habits were established and the father was declared to be a fool and one that you can't trust. Why would this boy ever want to take a big problem to his father.

The underlying purpose of any discipline should be to create a growth experience for the individual involved. The child should be as involved in the process as possible.

The structure that governs how individuals interact with each other has a great impact on the growth of each individual in any group. Some important habits and attitudes are learned as a result of the structure that exists in the home and many of these habits and attitudes are not going to change much as a result of experiencing other types of structures. All groups, including families need to have some kind of a rule system. This does not need to be overwhelming, but there does need to be a framework of expectations and consequences that are clear and understandable. Often, in a family, Dad has a set of rules that he grew up with that he insists upon adopting. Mother also has a set of rules that she grew up with and insists upon adopting. Then very often, without realizing it, they end up sabotaging each other's favorite rules. The kids sit in the middle waiting for the dust to settle. In the meantime they learn: Don't worry about rules, adults are not really serious about them anyway.

It is important that parents recognize that their marriage creates the formation of a new and in many ways unique family unit. Each of their backgrounds is somewhat different from the other. Often individuals marry, have children, and begin the process of rearing children without recognizing the importance of this idea. Sooner or later, however, parents have to come to grips with the personal backgrounds and goals of each individual partner. Instead of waiting until some problem occurs that must be solved by drastic action, it is wiser to recognize that families, like any other organization or group needs a system of organization which is customarily called discipline.

WHERE DISCIPLINE COMES FROM

To help husband and wife to look at some of the differences and similarities in their backgrounds they should each separately go through the following short questionnaire.

A Study of Parental Discipline

1. The discipline in my family was done mostly by:

   A. Mother
   B. Father
   C. Both

2. Rules for family behavior were set up by:
   A. Mother
   B. Father
   C. Both
   D. Family
   E. No one

3. Mealtimes were pleasant experiences where the family was all together:
   A. Always
   B. Most of the time
   C. Never

4. As children, we were encouraged to discuss our feelings openly:
   A. Always
   B. Usually
   C. Seldom
   D. Never

5. We were expected to tell our parents where we were going before we left and to be in by curfew:
   A. Always
   B. Usually
   C. Seldom
   D. Never

6. Both of my parents agreed on the rules which were established in our home and were consistent in seeing they were carried out:

A. Always
B. Usually
C. Seldom
D. Never

7. Educational pursuits were important in my family:
    A. Yes
    B. No

8. Our family did fun things together:
    A. Yes
    B. No

9. If there was a conflict between my parents they:
    A. Discussed it
    B. Ignored it
    C. Were Violent

The Impact of Inconsistent Discipline

As a result of not carefully considering their situation, parents create three different environments. One environment when the children are with father. Another environment when they are with mother. Yet another environment when children are with both mother and father. Without realizing it mother and father sabotage each other's unspoken rule system.

Adults who deal with young people in groups other than in the home must realize that this situation is very common and it may take a great deal of consistent effort to help these young people realize that you really are serious about following a consistent rule system. Before any adult can develop a workable rule system for children they must examine the types of expectations that they have of children. A child might grow up in a family where productivity is the only measure of a person's worth. The child might never be hugged or told, "I love you because you are my boy or because you have brown eyes." The only positive reinforcement that a child might ever receive is that he is a good boy if he scrubbed the carrots before bringing them in from the garden. In society, much of our emphasis has been on the importance of productivity as an indicator of a person's worth, as a result, many of our expectations and methods of discipline concentrate on that area of focus. Thus missing a very important fact. The child is also a developing human being whose personality characteristics (self-discipline, giving and receiving love, kindness, sensitivity, etc.) deserve at least as much attention as does the fact that the carrots were scrubbed clean, he gets good grades in school or in a tackle on the football team.

Responsibility as an Element of Discipline

Most parents would probably agree that it is important to teach children how to be responsible. When faced with a situation where we have the opportunity to teach responsibility we often respond based on our imprinted parenting styles rather than based on the parenting behavior that would most likely teach a child to be responsible. Consider the following scenarios:

1. Johnny refuses to get up in the morning. You would:

    a. Scream and yell at him that he is going to be late.
    b. Throw cold water on him.
    c. Rub his back and say, "You deserve five minutes more sleep. I'll wake you up again in five minutes."
    d. Get him his own alarm clock and have him be responsible for getting himself up.

2. Betty and Sue are arguing over who has to wash the dishes.

    a. Do them yourself.
    b. Spank them.
    c. Go away until it's all over.
    d. Try to discover and treat the real problem.

3. Allan seldom picks up his toys when he is through playing:

    a. Pick them up yourself.
    b. Throw them away.
    c. Put them up and say because you are not responsible you cannot play with your toys for on week.
    d. Get a cute toy box so he will want to pick them up.

4. You have told the kids to go to bed for the fourth time and they are still up.

    a. Tell them one more time, hoping this time it will work.
    b. Let them fall asleep on the floor.
    c. Get angry and spank them.
    d. Devise a plan, which would enable you to be firm and consistent in your approach to bedtime.

5. While you were gone shopping, someone broke the lamp in the living room. No one will admit to it.

a. Assume one of the neighbor children did it.
b. Call a family council and announce that because furniture is expensive and must be treated with respect and since no one will admit to the incident, there will be no dessert for anyone until enough money has been saved to pay for the lamp.
c. Cry
d. Get angry and spank everyone.

6. There is constant bickering about whose turn it is to take out the garbage.

   a. Devise a work chart where everyone takes turns.
   b. Do it yourself to avoid the argument.
   c. Decide who should do it based on that day's behavior.
   d. Assign it to one person as a permanent job.

The answers most likely to help children to become responsible are: 1.(d) 2.(d) 3.(c-d) 4.(d) 5.(b) 6.(a) How close are your initial inclination to these responses?

Effective Discipline

Effective training requires that adults regularly examine the personality development of children and identify what is needed by a particular child at a given stage in their development. This discussion of the rules and the reasons for having the rules is not one that adults can have one time only. It must be an ongoing one. Included in their discussion should be such things as: what are the individual's strengths and weaknesses? What personality traits are most important for us to develop? What are the needs that each child has in his or her current level of development? In the next short period of time, upon what specific things should we concentrated our attention? Concentrate on one thing at a time. A youth might be having a problem dealing with the consequences of their behavior. Therefore you would need to focus your attention on that particular trait. Another might have a difficult time responding to requests so you would have to focus your attention on teaching the ability to respond appropriately.

Effective discipline begins with the parents. It is really unfair and unreasonable to expect more self-control and more behavior change on the part of children than parents are willing to exhibit themselves. We have a tendency to spend our time thinking about all the things children or other people should do to change their behavior. We think about how others should be different and what others should do to make us happy. In all reality, we can have very little control over others, but we can and should have control over ourselves. In fact, we need to constantly remind ourselves that the real reason for any discipline is to develop positive character traits in children so that they will be able to control their own behavior. Our goal eventually is to help each child to become an independent and self-motivated individual with a strong internal sense of right and wrong and the ability to govern their behavior accordingly.

One of the areas over which adults have to gain control is their own emotions. If you are so angry with a child that you cannot deal with the situations calmly, then perhaps you should excuse yourself to "go to the bathroom" until you are somewhat calmer. Don't get me wrong here, I do not mean to say that it is wrong to be angry. Feelings are legitimate and need to be recognized, but you as an adult need to learn to be in control of your behavior. In other words, it is OK to be angry but it is not OK to let anger control you behavior. You must teach children that any consequences they experience are a result of their own misbehavior and not simply a result of their parent's anger. Most teenagers feel they are being punished because their parents are out of control, not because they themselves have done anything to deserve it. Perhaps the following example will help to illustrate how a parent could teach this principle to children:

One day young Brad and his sister Sally were heard in the midst of a loud altercation. Both children came running to mother. Sally said, "Brad hit me." Brad said, "Sally broke my favorite truck." Mother said, " I understand that you are angry Brad but it is not acceptable to hit your sister. It was also not acceptable for Sally to break your truck. Let's talk about it and see if we can come to some kind of solution."

Mother was making it clear that Brad's feelings of anger were OK but that his behavior was unacceptable. A very young child may only be able to learn that his or her behavior has made a parent angry. That is fine for a first step. By the pre-teen years, however, the child needs to know that their own behavior brings about clearly defined consequences. In far too many instances, children do not know what they rules are, they do not know what the consequences are and whatever consequences they experience are seen as being manufactured out of thin air as a result of the whims or anger of a parent.

It doesn't do any good at all to have a rule if all concerned are not willing and able consistently to act according to the rule. It is better to not have a rule if you cannot be consistent with it. If you have a rule that isn't followed, you can set a child up for a lifetime of failure. Remember, you should have:

(l) clear agreement.
(2) clear simple rules.

(3) regular, consistent follow through.

The experiences that children have with rules in their first five years as well as the attitudes they develop toward rules will in large part, determine how they will react to rules in school (and in the community at large). Parents and other adults need to try to teach the following attitudes to youth:

1. Rules are necessary.
2. Rules are there to help me be free of habits and behaviors that will be destructive to me in the long run.
3. Rules can be challenged as long as I do it in the right way, and at an appropriate time.
4. If I challenge a rule I have the responsibility not only to come up with a better alternative but also to be at least partly responsible for implementing the change if others accept it.

Consequences and Discipline

A system that depends on reward and punishment has a tendency to deny children the opportunity to make their own decisions and to be responsible for their own behavior. Clear consequences that are seen as natural and logical on the other hand, require children to be responsible for their own behavior.

Natural consequences are those which permit children to learn from the natural order of the physical world -- for example, that not eating is followed by hunger. Logical consequences are those which permit children to learn from the reality of the social order Ä for example, children who do not get up on time may be late to school and have to make up work. For consequences to be effective, the children involved must see them as logical. The purpose of using natural and logical consequences is to motivate children to make responsible decisions, not to force their submission. Consequences are effective only if you avoid having hidden motives of winning controlling.

Be both firm and kind. Firmness refers to your follow-through behavior. Kindness refers to the manner in which you present the choice. Talk less about consequences; act more. When you do things for children they can do for themselves, you are robbing them of self-respect and responsibility.

The differences between punishment and logical consequences are that punishment expresses the power of personal authority while logical consequences express the impersonal reality of social order. Punishment is rarely related to misbehavior, logical consequences are logically related to misbehavior. Punishment tells the child he or she is bad, logical consequences imply no element of moral judgement. Punishment focuses on what is past, logical consequences are concerned with present and future behavior. Punishment is associated with a treat, either open or concealed, logical consequences are based on good will, not on retaliation. Punishment demands obedience, logical consequences permit choice.

Avoid fights; they indicate lack of respect for the other Person. Do not give in; that indicates lack of respect for yourself. As you apply logical consequences, provide choices and accept the child's decision. Use a friendly tone of voice that communicates your good will. As you follow through with a consequence, assure children that they may try again later. Be patient, it will take time for natural and logical consequences to be effective.

Discipline as a Learning Experience

The kind of discipline structure in the home can teach some very important skills – such as completing tasks. This skill of task completion is one that needs to be learned early. It is difficult if not impossible to learn it in school. Family or group rules and traditions help to establish this habit. For example if a family has the rule that after dinner everyone helps to clear up the dinner table and stack the dishes the notion begins to sink in that there are certain things that are done before you go on to have fun. It doesn't have to be any one major rule or activity but it can be a sequence of events and ways of behaving that teach very gradually that there are certain responsibilities that come before personal wants.

I once knew a two-year-old boy who was fascinated with the mechanism that operated the living room drapes. His wise parents found a way of reinforcing this mechanism so that he could do no damage to it and gave him the responsibility of being the family drape operator. It was his job every morning to open the drapes and to close them at night when it became dark. If there was any reason to open or close the drapes on a special occasion Jonathan had to be summoned to do the job. He realized at an early age that he had responsibilities in the family and that he had an important place in the family structure. As he grew older he was given additional assignments. His next job was to be in charge of ordering milk from the milkman. He was four at the time. He was to put the color-coded tags on the milk box every other day to tell the milkman what products to leave for the family. The rule was that they could not purchase milk at the store. If Jonathan did not accomplish his task correctly the whole family had to suffer. He learned that his behavior not only had consequences for himself but for others as well. One of the devices that help to reinforce this notion with Jonathan was daily chart. Every night as part of his bedtime ritual one of his parents would ask him if he had accomplished the goals that were listed on his chart. If he had accomplished a goal he could chose a colored sticker to put on the appropriate square on his chart. His first chart had the following items on it:

1. Open the drapes
2. Dress Myself
3. Pick up all my toys at night
4. Close the drapes.

As other assignments were given a new chart was made. This also started the notion of regular reporting and evaluation of performance.

For older children another approach is also effective. After any assignment is completed or on a weekly basis, sit down with a youth and ask the following three questions: First, what do you like most about the job (or jobs) you have done; Second, what do you like least about what you were able to do and Third, what would you do differently next time? You should make notes of what the child liked least and also what they would do differently. Next week you should be able to make positive comments about their efforts to do a better job. If you establish this kind of routine early and make the rule for yourself that you will not say anything negative until after you have said at least three things positive, you will find that the youth involved has develop a sense of responsibility and self evaluation. One of the major problems in many teenagers is that they have the notion that their behavior has no consequences for anyone else but themselves, and any connection between consequences and their own behavior is a very tenuous one. Anything that happens to them is because someone is "out to get them," not because they made a wrong choice or exhibited inappropriate behavior.

A recording brought in by a parent of her interactions with her children contains a choice example of how to teach children to ignore rules. This particular tape starts out with a conversation between the mother and several of her friends in the living room. At one point you hear the mother say, "Please don't touch the TV David." After some further conversation you hear, "David, now don't play with the TV, please." Several minutes later you hear, "David, I am telling you for the last time to leave the TV alone." Each time you can hear a little more anger and frustration in her voice. The next interaction is in a much louder voice and there is a treat involved. We hear, "David, you are really going to be in trouble if you don't stop doing that." Some more time passes and then we hear the mother's anguished voice: "Oh! David! Now look what you have done!" In this interchange and many others like it, David learned some significant principles:

- Do not listen to mother. She doesn't really mean what she says.

- Do whatever you want because there are not going to be any consequences for your behavior.

Adults are wise to repeat a request only once in order to give the youth the benefit of the doubt. After the second statement you should DO something. You do not have to be violent or mean, just do SOMETHING. In our example of David, the mother needed only to pick the youngster up and put him in a different room. After several years the child learns that you need to listen to parents because they are going to say something only twice and then they are going to DO SOMETHING. If the parents do something somewhat different each time, they leave the child wondering what is going to happen. Usually children will decide that they do not want to find out what will happen. At times it may even be wise to ask the child if they have understood your request. Do not be satisfied with a response like, "Yes, I hear you." Instead, say something like, "I want to make sure that I said what I meant. Would you please tell me what you understood me to say." That way you can listen to what they say and make corrections if they have not understood.

The following interaction between a teacher and a group of students who wanted permission to eat their lunch in the classroom while they worked on a project is a good example:

STUDENT: "Miss Jones, we would like to eat here in the classroom everyday this week so that we can finish our project. Would that be OK? "

TEACHER: "That would be fine but you must understand that if you choose to leave a mess you have also chosen to eat your lunch in the cafeteria. Now. please tell me your understanding of our agreement."

STUDENT: "You said that if we make a mess you won't let us eat in the classroom anymore. "

TEACHER: "No! that is not quite what I meant. It is not up to me what happens, it is up to you. It is your choice. If you choose to make a mess then you have also chosen to eat in the Cafeteria and I believe in honoring your choices. Now, please tell me how you understand the situation? "

STUDENT: "OK! If we make a mess then you will take it from that, that we want to eat in the cafeteria rather than the classroom and we will get exactly what we want."

TEACHER: "Exactly."

The teacher used good communication skills to make sure that the message she wanted to get across to the students was well understood. She felt it was important that these 6th graders understand that they were indicating their choices by their behavior and that they would be held accountable for that choice.

Families need to meet together regularly to discuss their interactions with one another and to clarify what rules are a part of the system. The family meeting or council is a time for a family to discuss problems and to clarify understandings, not to hear a lecture. Family councils promote a feeling of one-ness. Each person comes to know his individual importance to the family. He comes to realize that his opinions and actions really matter. No family is immune to problems, but many problems can be avoided if a family will meet together regularly to discuss how they should interact with one another, with the rules are and what the consequences for breaking the rules are. Each member of the family should have some input in formulating and redefining those rules and consequences. The complexity of today's living and diversity of individual needs insure that problems will be plentiful. Successful families have no magical power but have developed skillful ways of dealing with problems. Successful families are always trying to start things. Failing families are always trying to stop things.

Effective family problem solving requires:

OPEN CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION: Free exchange of ideas and information pertinent to the solution. All members of the family should contribute and parents need to support, appreciate and encourage and participation of ALL family members.

LEADERSHIP: Leadership to coordinate problems solving efforts is needed. The role of a parent should be tempered with flexibility and shift as required by differing problems. There may be times when one of the children should serve as the discussion leader.

PROVISION FOR CONFLICT OF IDEAS: Communicate and evaluate conflicting ideas and involve the total potential of family members to insure better solutions.

AGREEMENT AS TO FAMILY GOALS: Family members must be committed to the solution of certain problems. As children continue to develop problem-solving skills, problems become easier to handle, not because the nature of the problems change, but because the family's ability to deal effectively with problems increases. An agenda for a typical council might look like this:

1. Opening: (story, remarks, song) whatever fits.
2. Plan of action: (Agenda)
3. Suggestions: encourage each to share their feelings.
4. Comment on each suggestion: Example Ä "I can tell you are really thinking." "You have some good ideas." "That's an interesting comment." Make sure any comment you give is positive. This will encourage all to voice their opinions and eases the disappointment if their particular choice is not adopted. Be sure to write down every idea and suggestion.
5. Decision Making: You can vote by raise of hands or by secret ballot or simply asking each group member to sate how they feel as a result of the discussion. It should be made clear that the results of any voting will be taken into consideration by the parents. In other words, the decisions are still made and/or ratified by the adults.
6. Provide time for problems or plans family members would like to present. Planning a family calendar for the week is essential.
7. Closing: (remarks, song) adapt to your needs.
   REFRESHMENTS: This doesn't have to be anything big or fancy, but it makes a good ending.

Family Councils give members an opportunity to talk and work together. Here adults can share their ideas and values with youth and teach basic principles of conflict resolution and problem solving. The adults are the Executive Committee and they make all the decisions as they meet together regularly. If they are wise, they will listen to what youth say and incorporate what they have heard into their decisions so that the that youth know that their ideas have been heard. The young people's contributions can be very important and adults need to listen carefully. Adults do not however, need to agree with everything that young people say. Young People are quite ready to deal with not having their own way all the time as long as they feel that they have been listened to and that some of their thoughts and ideas have had an impact on the decisions that are made. The rule system needs to be constantly clarified, discussed and put in a prominent place in writing so that it can be read and understood.

A friend of mine once told me about a city that adopted the policy of having a mystery speed limit on all of the highways. Every morning the Chief of Police would call the Mayor to find out what the speed limit was. If the city was doing well financially there was no limit. If the city was in trouble the limit was set very low. The people who lived in the city became more and more paranoid about driving on any of the roads because they never knew just what they could get away with and what they were going to get nailed for. That is what often happens to children. They find that if their parents are feeling good they can get away with almost anything. If their parents are having a bad day they could be landed on for almost anything. It is this lack of consistency that makes life difficult for children. I know of parents who, according to all the theories, are really doing everything wrong. But they are doing everything in such a clear and consistent manner and the two of them are so united in what they do that the children do very well. It is even a wise idea for families and groups to write a constitution. As soon as a couple get married they should sit down and talk about what kind of system they want to have and what kind of rules they think are important enough to commit themselves to. They can also talk at this time about the kinds of traditions they want to create concerning special occasions or activities to give their group a special character or flavor. One rule that should be part of every family or group constitution is:

ANYTIME ANYONE GOES SOMEPLACE, THEY NOTIFY A MEMBER OF THE GROUP WHERE THEY ARE GOING AND WHEN THEY WILL RETURN. IF PLANS CHANGE THEY WILL NOTIFY A RESPONSIBLE MEMBER OF THE GROUP. IF THEY CANNOT NOTIFY ANYONE THEY MUST STICK TO THE ORIGINAL PLAN.

Usually the first person to break this rule is one of the adults. If adults can faithfully live this rule, I guarantee that they will have fewer problems with their teenagers. Usually a child will not really be aware of this as a possible rule until they get to be a teenager and start to be more mobile. They immediately see the rule as an indication of lack of trust in them or adults desire to control them. If you can say to them, "Look, this has been a rule in our family since the day our parents got married. We all live according to this rule." You will have much easier time dealing with your teenagers. Children will also learn that rules are part of a larger system that is necessary in order for individuals, families and society to live together. Rules are not just there to make you particular life more difficult. Another rule that can go a long way to teach children to be responsible for their own behavior is:

TAKING CARE OF THE HOUSE, INSIDE AND OUT IS A RESPONSIBILITY SHARED EQUALLY BY EVERY MEMBER OF THE FAMILY. WE WILL MEET TOGETHER AS A FAMILY REGULARLY TO DELEGATE PORTIONS OF THIS RESPONSIBILITY IN TERMS OF EACH INDIVIDUAL'S ABILITY TO PERFORM.

Parents should spend 12 years teaching children how to clean and take care of their rooms. On a child's twelfth birthday they should give a certificate which reads:

ON YOUR TWELFTH BIRTHDAY WE YOUR PARENTS HEREBY GRANT YOU THE RIGHT TO BE COMPLETELY IN CHARGE OF YOUR OWN ROOM. WE WILL NOT ENTER IT TO CLEAN IT, TO RETRIEVE DIRTY CLOTHES FROM IT OR TO MAKE YOUR BED, ETC.. YOU ARE IN CHARGE. IF WE DON'T LIKE WHAT WE SEE IN THERE WE WOULD ONLY REQUEST THAT YOU KEEP THE DOOR SHUT SO THAT WE DON'T HAVE TO LOOK AT IT.

I know that many parents would have a hard time with this, but often they have a difficult time with it because of their own ego and the need to be seen as the parents of neat and clean children not because of any real principle. This action on the part of parents can help to teach children how to deal with things that are their responsibility. They may not do very well with it for a while. In order for this to work of course, two things must happen during these first 12 years. First, the child must be taught correctly how to take care of the room. Second, the parents must present a good example of how they take care of their own room.

At some time between the ages of 10 and 12 each child in the family should become responsible for providing a meal for the entire family once a week. This might start out with getting the milk and cereal out for a cold cereal breakfast. The next step might be soup and sandwiches and then on from there. I would expect that there will be far less complaining about meals when the children know that they are a part of the family meal preparation system. Besides that, it will teach them how to be responsible and how to take care of themselves. This is particularly important for future marriage decisions. How many young men get married in order to have someone take care of them. Wouldn't it be better for a couple to get married because of the quality of their relationship and not just because one is not capable of being independent? For this and other reasons, the family rule system or lack of it can set the children up for a failure experience when they attempt to establish a family of their own.

Work on reinforcing those positive behaviors and attitudes that you have decided are important and ignore most of the negative behavior. If you are continually giving children attention and reinforcement for positive things they have done then you have a foundation to sit down with them and occasionally discuss some of the negative things that need to be changed. You approach the negative behaviors as a coach and a friend that will help them to make the needed change rather than as a Hitler that is going to demand it "or else." Establish a training program. In doing so, one of your basic assumptions out to be:

WE WILL ASSUME THAT ANYTIME A CHILD IS DOING SOMETHING WRONG, THEY MUST BE DOING IT BECAUSE THEY DO NOT KNOW HOW TO DO SOMETHING RIGHT. DO NOT CRITICIZE THEM, TEACH THEM!

In establishing any kind of training program you will probably have to look at the types of consequences and rewards that you use. Consequences need to be as closely related to the offense as possible and not too overwhelming. If you tell a child that they will be grounded for a month, you have just lost your ability to have much of an impact on that child for the next month. Most things should be for a day or two or possibly for a week if the situation is severe. You don't want them to think that they are so far in the hole already that there is no hope. In that case they may often decide to stick with negative behavior. Each child is different. One child might consider spending 15 minutes in his room alone the absolute worst thing in the world. Another child might enjoy it. You have to know each individual and talk about what works with each one. Don't just look at negative things. I remember a young man in 6th grade that was giving his parents and teachers fits. In talking to him one day the counselor inadvertently picked up that one of his favorite things was sucking the juice out of a lemon. His parents thought that this was not healthy and tried to discourage the practice. The counselor realized that they had been missing a good thing. A contract was set up whereby the boy could earn the right to suck on lemons by exhibiting appropriate behavior. This boy changed in a matter of weeks. Now, I would not change my behavior for the right to suck on a lemon but this boy would and did.

You do not want to have to continually use rewards and consequences to maintain behavior. But you might have to carefully use these tools to get new behavior started or old behavior stopped. Any new behavior is very fragile. It has to be nourished and encouraged if it is to become strong and sturdy. Eventually you want to get to the point where the behavior is firmly established and rewards itself with only occasional reinforcement. An important principle here is that the rules may stay the same but the system of training, rewarding or consequating the behavior associated with those rules may change as the child's ability to internalize those rules changes. This is why some schools get themselves into a ridiculous position by trying to systematize the "discipline" program in the whole school. This approach does not usually allow for individual differences and individual growth. Perhaps a particular type of reward system is needed to get a new behavior started but if you continue to use that reward system it can become self-defeating. Likewise, you may need to use a particular consequence to get a behavior stopped but in order to keep that behavior stopped you may have to change the system or may even be able to eliminate it at least until the behavior shows up again.

I remember a teenager who wanted to become a great organist. His mother complained often that she could not get him to practice regularly and he even reported that the constant hassle from mother was beginning to make him think he would give up on having anything to do with music. Practice was a constant bone of contention between them. I suggested that the parents needed to allow their son to be responsible for his own practice time. Both parents were certain that the only thing that would keep him practicing was their constant pressure. They were getting a lot more arguing done than practice. I asked the boy how serious he was about wanting to succeed with his music. He indicated that he really wanted to but just had problems getting around to doing the kind of practice that was required. He knew he should but when his parents "nagged" him about it he became rebellious and determined not to practice in order to spite them. After some discussion we wrote up a contract. He was very proud of $500.00 that he had saved and so he agreed to put that money into a savings account when his name and my name on it. The contract specified that any day he did not practice I could go and withdraw $50.00 from this new savings account. Any time his mother or father even mentioned practice they must deposit $50.00 into the account. After several months of successful performance with no deposits or withdrawals we decided that the contract was no longer needed and the young man put his money back into his own account. His behavior of regular practice sessions was a part of him and he had proven to his parents that he could be responsible without their contact "nagging." The point here is that the boy wanted to achieve the goal and needed some assistance in learning how to become self-motivating.

Each child is still a free agent unto itself and they may choose, in spit of all you do, to go in a completely different direction. Two major things you have to rely on are: first, the quality of the relationship that you build, second, the unity and depth of the relationship that exists between the adults involved. Any social system has to have some source of power and authority. the only way a family has any real lasting source of power and authority, is if Mom and Dad are acting in complete and unanimous agreement. Dad may think that he has the power and authority, but if he is using that supposed power and authority without the complete and unanimous agreement of Mother as an equal partner, then there is no real power and authority in that family. You have eventual anarchy and chaos in the minds of the children. Father may be strong enough to suppress all the problems for quite some time, but eventually the results will be mainly negative.

A mother came to me with a problem concerning her sixteen-year-old son. According to her he was irresponsible and really difficult to live with. Information from teachers and others seemed to verify this evaluation. The family had never developed any real clear statement of what the rules were and what was expected of each member of the family. After some work we developed a set of rules and a system of assigning household chores. This young man's particular task was to empty all the trash baskets in the house and put out the garbage on the curb once a week. After two weeks the mother was quite certain that this was not going to work because the garbage had not been taken care of. One of the rules was that parents could not "nag" the kids about their tasks. They could give one reminder per week. During the third week matters were complicated by a breakdown in the garbage disposal in the sink. That meant that they would be keeping wet garbage as well as dry in the kitchen. The mother was quite concerned by this time. I asked her if she felt that the garbage was more important that her son's future. She almost said that the garbage was more important to her at this point in time, but of course it wasn't. During the fourth week, mother had an opportunity that she could not resist. Her son had some friends over to the house and while they were busy in his room the mother set out cake and ice cream in the kitchen. She went to the boy's room and announced that cake and ice cream was in the kitchen for anyone that wanted some. She was nearly trampled in the ensuing stampede. While the boys were contentedly eating, one of David's friends sniffed the air and said, "Hey, what died in your kitchen?' Needless to say the boy was somewhat bothered by this event and the very next day he emptied out the garbage and had done his tasks faithfully ever since with only a few periodic lapses. What David needed to learn was that once a task was assigned to him there was absolutely no one else that would do this task for him. In this case this was all that was needed for this young man to learn to be responsible for his own behavior.

Structure is important because it prevents confusion. For example, if children know what time they must go to bed every night, they get used to the idea and can plan on it happening. If bedtime is viewed as an important event and given proper attention it can be a loving, nurturing experience. The children will see that you feel this event is important enough to have your undivided attention and will be more likely to cooperate. One-half hour before bedtime, turn off the television and put away all books and toys, take care of toileting needs, undress and put on night cloths, spend a few minutes with each child individually for prayers or conversation. Being firm and consistent is an important key to fostering good feelings at bedtime. To be successful in building an effective rule system, first spend some time talking about what you want to achieve and what your expectations are.

Come to an agreement about the rules to adopt. There ought to be a few clear, well-defined rules and those rules out to be in writing in some prominent place for all to see. The group needs to review these rules in their group council meetings and talk about problems they have as individuals living together in a constructive growth-producing way. Adults need to make sure that they listen to the comments and thoughts of group members and try to be as consistent as they can. A major goal is to teach children to be responsible for their own behavior and to complete tasks assigned to them. A companion goal is to teach them how to develop and contribute to the development of rules that help individuals to live with others and to maximize their own and other's growth.

A FAMILY CONSTITUTION.

We the members of the ____________ Family, in order to promote the development of each individual member of the family to become independent, creative, responsible individuals capable of making a significant contribution to others and also in order to maximize the benefit to be gained from an effective supportive family unit which we see as an effective way for individuals to reach their maximum potential, do ordain and establish this group constitution. We believe in the following principles and rules:

1. That there must be a framework of rules which govern our behavior as a family and as individuals within the family.

2. That each family member has a significant contribution to make to all decisions made by and for the family but that the decision making power unless delegated rests with the parents.

3. That the responsibility of taking care of our physical environment is shared equally by every member of the family. We will regularly make specific assignments for specific tasks to be done by specific individuals but the general care and keeping of where we live is the responsibility of us all.

4. That each of us has a responsibility to help create an emotional environment where each of us feels secure, valued and that each of us knows that we can count on each other to follow all of the rules that we have agreed to and to help each other achieve some significant personal growth.

SELF-ESTEEM:
A Process of Building

THE CONCEPT

There are a series of tasks that parents need to understand as a part of the process of building self-esteem in children. Completing all of the tasks helps the child gain self-respect. At the same time they are trying to handle their bodies, complexities of language, modern contraptions and society's rules. With many jobs to do, strong internal pressures, and many discoveries to make the preschooler needs understanding cooperation to build his self-esteem. Show non-pressurized learning rather than rapid high-pressure learning. Help your child by providing experiences which help to complete the tasks of selfhood. Treat your child as a separate independent person.

When children are unsuccessful in building self-esteem, they can respond in several different ways:

- They may become DEFENSIVE and conjure cover-ups for feelings of inadequacy.
- They may SUBMIT and accept inadequacy as a fact and life a self-effacing life.
- They may WITHDRAW and retreat into fantasies that block out the rejections they suffer.

The path chosen depends upon the temperament, role models, experiences and results of trial and error. These defenses are psychological weapons against anxiety, fear, insecurity or inadequacy. They are used to help the child maintain his integrity but are rooted in a child's belief that he or she is bad, unlovable, and unworthy. This secret feeling forms the core of a neuroses or scar tissue around a psychological wound.

TASKS OF SELF-ESTEEM

During the first six years there are six tasks that need to be completed in order to maximize the development of self-esteem.

TASK 1: SEPARATENESS: Language is the tool that allows the child to feel fully separate. Learning his own name, the child begins to have a symbol for thinking of himself apart from others. His name gives him a frame on which to hang descriptive labels. Around 15 to 18 months, the child gets an inkling of his separateness but it is hazy. Full awareness will not hit until 1 1/2 years. Autonomy is the foundation stone to future self-esteem.

Parents need to respect the child's need to say "no" but continue to guide him through the behavior you expect. Rather than being constantly confrontive, channel the child's defiant acts into acceptable outlets. Invent games that allow both of you to get tasks accomplished. Positive suggestions instead of direct orders are more effective.

The degree to which the environment meets his needs, the intensity of competition, how parental power is used, the extent of defiance he sees around him and how it is handled, his physical health -- all play a part in how the child's deals with this stage.

Experiences, which are important at this stage, are: toilet training, mealtime, independence and anxiety at being away from the parents. Fears of desertion are strong. Try to wait until at least age 3 to make major changes in the environment.

TASK 2: ACHIEVEMENT AND RECOGNITION: Once the toddler realizes he or she is separate they will try to overcome their helplessness by mastering themselves and the environment. They need experiences that offset feelings of incompetence. Parents need to help tailor the environment to let children master tasks. Give them tasks they can master and then be sure to validate them with praise, touch or "I'm proud of you."

Experiences that allow success means that the parent needs to provide: step stools to reach things, low hooks, non-breakable dishes, chairs that fit, opportunities to help you around the house. Potty training and mealtime are areas, which particularly build or tear down self-esteem based on the way the parent handles them.

TASK 3: INITIATIVE: Encourage your children to express ideas and thoughts. Let them help plan ways to handle things, "What would you like to do first, eat lunch or have a story?" Or, "We have the afternoon together what are some things you would like to do?" Validate suggestions with "that's a good idea!"

Nursery school at this age opens up a world of new ideas and can give the child a chance to show creativity and understanding of new concepts.

TASK 4: ATTACHMENT TO THE OPPOSITE-SEXED PARENT: Somewhere between 3 and 5 the child needs to experience their maleness or femaleness in relation to the opposite-sexed parent. Emotional attachment at this age provides each child with his or her first, safe, attempt at establishing a romantic relationship. If handled wisely, this attachment acts as an experience upon which the child builds in adolescence. This task begins the establishment of sexual roles. Help your child by not making them feel guilty about their attachment to mom or dad. It is important not to accentuate feelings in the child by seductive behavior. There are certain activities that should NOT take place at this point:

Teasing you child about their body or sex.
Sexually stimulating physical behavior.
Intense affectionate gestures.
Nudity by parents or older siblings of opposite sex.
Sexual intimacies between parents within view of the child.
Having the child sleep with the opposite-sexed parent.
Showering with the opposite-sexed older siblings or parents.

Drawing the line on these behaviors helps a child to feel safe with their new emerging sexual feelings and helps to prevent stimulus overload. It allows him or her to say "my feelings are all right, there is nothing wrong with me."

TASK 5: SELF-CENTEREDNESS Around five and a half in girls and sic in boys, an important psychological shift occurs. The center of the child's universe moves from parent to child. The child's need to think of himself or herself first does not mean that you should constantly give in. It does mean that you must not make him or her feel guilty about this self-absorption. Be emphatic but protect your right. Be firm but understanding which will make the child feel worthy but not manipulated.

TASK 6: PREFERENCE FOR THE SAME SEX Once attachment to the opposite sex occurs, the child moves again to prefer others of the same sex. By age six boys begin masculine pursuits while girls tend toward mother and other girls. This stage helps the child establish the sexual role. This preference continues and intensifies until early teens and middle teens in boys.

THE PROCESS

The conscience begins to take shape around six even though the sense of right and wrong is formulating earlier. The conscious is made up of the moral standards a child absorbs.

If a child takes something that does not belong to him or her, talk to him or her privately while understanding this behavior is part of growing-up. Help the child make restitution without shame or humiliation. A child must not be made to feel less worthy because the conscience is underdeveloped before its time.

Around six a child moves from total dependence on the family and begins to value the qualities of peers. Boys tend to value athletic ability, physical strength and courage. Girls tend more to value physical attractiveness, friendliness and sociability. The child who has traits valued by his or her agemates feels more adequate than the one who does not because they get positive reflections from the group. The child whose interests and values are noticeably out of step with those his or her age is likely to feel isolated and as a result as having less worth. Increasingly from six years into adolescence, each child needs social support from others whose values match his or her own.

Completing all of these tasks helps the child gain self-respect. At the same time they are trying to handle their bodies, complexities of language, modern contraptions and society's rules. With many jobs to do, strong internal pressures, and many discoveries to make, the pre-schooler needs understanding cooperation to build self-esteem. Show non-pressurized learning rather than rapid high-pressure learning. Help your child be providing experience which help they to complete the tasks of selfhood. Treat each child as a separate independent person.

If your child misses completing some tasks of selfhood during the normal period, start today to provide these experiences again. Reminiscing and talking over matters can help open communication necessary to get started.

During the middle years from age 6 to 12. the child has a primary task of defining his or her person from reflections they receive from outside the family. Being accepted by peers, mastering physical and social skills and sameness or looking like the group all become very important. As they refine their separateness you will receive messages that say to keep out or that this is private and you will notice them keeping secrets. They may also have a tendency to develop a series of or a special collection of some kind. They will have a tendency to choose friends of the same sex and to develop crushes on individuals of the opposite sex.

During this developmental period it is important to have an adult role model of the same sex and to be cherished separate from their performance. The development of the conscience continues in this period.

During Adolescence the primary task consists of a reevaluation of self and a reworking of the identity. For high self-esteem the adolescent must reevaluate himself or herself in four major areas:

- Establish a final independence from the family and agemates. They need to become a 'confident individual.'
- Relate successfully to the opposite sex.
- Prepare for an occupation for self-support.
- Establish a workable and meaningful philosophy of life.

Parents can help to facilitate process by respecting their teenager's privacy. Make your home attractive. Teens are sensitive to their friend's feelings about their home and parents even though they are not always looking their best themselves. Their friends need to feel comfortable in your home. Keep your supervision subtle and support constructive group activities.

Avoid making them feel guilty about the tasks of growth -- especially their need to move away from you; avoid sarcasm and teasing about their changing body, feelings or dates. Maintain a sense of humor, and an openness to talk about anything. Discuss with them the changes and pressure they may be facing. Discuss with younger siblings their changing needs and changing status within the family. Listen with all your heart to feelings and points of view.

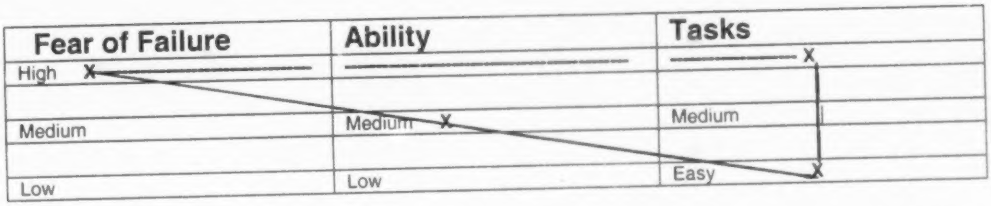
Establish basic family policies and expectations by democratic procedures. Work with their need for competence and recognition. Provide a safe climate in the home where they may share and try out new behaviors. Provide feedback on these behaviors without a character assassination.

There is a way to describe the impact of self-esteem on behavior. This description can be shown in a diagram, which shows three things:

First, imagine a list of all the tasks that a person might attempt to accomplish listed in order of difficulty from Impossible down to easy. Second rate their ability level from High to Low. Third, evaluate their fear of failure from High to Low. A high fear of failure is the opposite of high self-esteem.

Fear of Failure	Ability	Tasks
High	High	Impossible
Medium	Medium	Medium
Low	Low	Easy

Let us assume that the person we are trying to describe has an average ability level and a fairly high fear of failure. In this case you can draw a line straight across from the high fear of failure and another line from the fear of failure through the ability level. These two lines describe two sides of a triangle which extend over to the right and include the middle range of tasks. All of those tasks covered by the triangle are tasks that the individual will not attempt to accomplish.



What will happen is that the individual will choose to attempt the easy tasks. He or she will accomplish the easy tasks and receive absolutely no psychological benefit from the experience. After a time this person will grow tired of only accomplishing easy tasks and will attempt to do something impossible. When they fail to accomplish an impossible task they will say to themselves and others: "See, I knew I would fail."

As a result of this pattern of behavior, the person's ability level will actually begin to decline and the fear of failure will get higher. The triangle will grow so large as to include ALL possible tasks. The person has become immobilized. He or she can do nothing except try to find a way to escape from the scene entirely.

The way that you help a person to escape from this negative pattern is to set goals to accomplish tasks that are within the ability range but also somewhat challenging. These goals must be in writing and must possess the following characteristics:

- A clear description of the goal.
- A specific time limit.
- A clear definition of success.

For example:

John Jones will learn to play Chopin's prelude in A #3 by June 4. Success will be achieved if he does the following:

a. Plays the piece at tempo of at least 80.
b. Makes no more than 10 mistakes.

In this way John Jones knows what he is attempting to accomplish and when it is completed he cannot disregard or deny his accomplishment.

Enough evidence has accumulated to give us the facts that if a child has high self-esteem -- he or she has it made. The decisive factor lies in a person's attitude toward themselves -- their degree of self esteem is then supported by continued success experiences.

Self-esteem is how a person feels about themselves, how much they like their particular person. It is a quiet response to the self, a sense of self-respect. When you have it deep inside -- you are glad you are you. With it you don't need to be impressing others, you know you have value. A child's judgement of self influences the kinds of friends they choose, how they get along with others, the kind of person they marry and how productive they will be. It affects their creativity, integrity, stability and whether they will be a leader or a follower. Self-esteem forms the core of personality and determines the use the individual will make of their aptitudes and abilities. As a parent you must help your child to a firm and wholehearted belief in themselves.

Strong self-respect and self-esteem are based on the conviction that they are lovable, they matter and have value simply because they exist. They feel they are worthwhile, they can handle their environment with competence and they know they have something to offer others. For a child to FEEL loved is an important beginning. There can be a big difference between being loved and feeling loved.

Self-esteem is maintained by the quality of relationships that exist between children and those who play a significant role in their life and their experiences. Research indicates that your good intentions as a parent have a greater chance of becoming reality if you help them to be quietly glad that they are who they are.

SEX EDUCATION:

Teaching Children About Sex at Home

BASIC VALUES

It is important for parents to provide information and to get involved in discussions regarding sex because the loving, accepting and understanding family environment provides the best setting in which aspects of sexual reproduction can be learned with a minimum of apprehension, confusion and anxiety. Children are not born with an innate understanding and appreciation for the reproductive process. Each child will some way or another attach significance and meaning to his or her own body and it's processes. They will do so at their own rate and in accordance with their own state of readiness. Parents are really in the best position, if they will, to be sensitive to the individual needs and readiness of each individual child.

For the well adjusted individual, few aspects of one's total personality will have such pervasive impact upon their life as how he feels about himself as a male or how she feels about herself as a female. An individual's attitude about themselves and their basic self-esteem are closely related and tied to their feelings about their own sexuality. This is an area where parents can be in a position to be particularly sensitive. When the parent teaches the child about sexual processes, the intimate nature of physical and sexual information creates a bonding effect between the parent and child. This process entails the mutual sharing of trusts and confidences within an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance. It allows for an ongoing dialogue between parent and child to make it possible for new understandings and thoughts on the part of the child to be shared with the parent. the child has in the parent a constant source of feedback and clarification of their own information and ideas. This allows the parent to offer suggestions and perhaps new information or ideas to guide the child in his or her thinking. If parents are open and honest in their communication, children will value and trust information which parents provide more so than that obtained from other sources.

The Process

There are several basic principles involved in this process that can help parents to understand their role and opportunity. It is important that parents identify what their values are with respect to issues of sex and reproduction. You must know what you would like the outcome of your teaching to be. How do you feel about the place of sex in your own life? What kinds of attitudes do you have and what kinds of attitudes do you want your children to have? Remember that attitudes and values may be far more important to the child than specific information.

You need to assess the amount and accuracy of your own current knowledge. Many parents are themselves woefully ignorant of bodily functions and processes. This lack of knowledge and clear understanding makes them want to avoid the whole area with their children. This feeling of discomfort on their part can in itself convey a negative attitude about sex to the children that no amount of education can erase.

You need to determine your child's level of ability to understand sex-related issues. In large measure, this is determined by his or her stage of mental growth. Avoid overexposing with information he or she cannot understand.

You need to find out what you do not know. You can hardly teach children something with which you are only slightly familiar. There are many books from public libraries and also from your doctor, which can help to give you the clear, understandable facts and information. Determine what you feel is important to teach. Children need to eventually understand puberty and the development of secondary sexual characteristics both male and female. They need to understand the male and female reproductive systems including menstruation, fertilization and the birth process as well as the appropriate place of sex in an individual's life.

Become comfortable with the terminology. Being free from inwardly felt anxiety will provide you with great confidence when actually teaching your children. You may need to be at least somewhat familiar with the slang terminology that your child has picked up but you should usually use standard medical terminology.

Practice and rehearse before you actually teach. Your children deserve your best preparation and instruction. The positive impressions you make upon them during these teaching moments will endure forever. Don't plan on giving one major speech and then being done with it. In more likelihood there will be a series of short conversations as a part of a continuing dialogue.

Levels of Understanding

What you teach your child in terms of specific sexual parts and functions, is probably not as important as what he or she is able to understand. What your child is able to understand is largely determined by their stage of mental development. Research has identified six stages reflecting children's ability to understand the reproductive process. They range from a three-year-old's understanding to full adult comprehension.

LEVEL ONE: (3-4 year olds) A level one child can understand where babies come from in terms of their having come from some place -- "mommy's tummy, " "heaven," "a store," "hospital." For the most part, there is no notion of origin; babies have always existed somewhere.

LEVEL TWO: (4 year old) This child believes babies are manufactured. He recognizes babies have not always existed; they have to be 'built.' This child's understanding reflects a belief that literal manual and mechanical processes construct babies.

LEVEL THREE: (5-7 year old) This child explains procreation in terms of what is technically and literally feasible in a world in which all nature is alive. Explanations of conception as "planting a seed" are taken quite literally. They may recognize love, marriage, sexual intercourse, and union of sperm and ovum as major ingredients in making babies, but are unable to combine them into a coherent whole.

By this age, if you haven't already taught children about their body and helped them to learn the proper terminology, they most likely have some misconceptions that will need to be cleared up. So you could first begin by finding out where they are. You do this by asking specific questions. Timing is important and if you are looking for a teaching moment you will find one. Some children, for example, might use the slang word for breast. One mother observed her daughter referring to her breasts as "tits." The mother, matter-of-factly said, "Those are called breasts." She then went on to talk about the functions of the breast, telling her daughter that it is a way for mothers to feed their infants that bring warmth and love and comfort to both mother and baby. She explained the way the milk comes down through tubes in a circular fashion down the breast to the nipple and is warm and sweet. It is the only food the baby really needs for the first part of his life. You can continue to do this with each individual male and female body part, emphasizing the part's function.

When you are relaxed and calmly matter-of-fact in using proper terminology, your children will assimilate you attitude. If it is difficult for you to discuss sex, as it is with many parents, you might want to practice in private until you feel comfortable.

Children of this age ask a lot of questions, but although they may be asking for it, they don't really want a college course. Responses might be something like this:

QUESTION: How do babies start?

ANSWER: A mother and father want to have a baby. It takes two of them. A cell or sperm or seed (whichever you wish) from the father meets a cell (or seed or egg) from the mother. The two meet inside the mother. The cells are so small at first you couldn't even see them. They join together and the baby grows from that. When it is big enough the baby is born.

This will probably suffice, but he may come back and repeat the question again.

QUESTION: How does the father's seed get into the mother?

ANSWER: You know boys have a penis and a girl doesn't, she has an opening. The two fit together. That is why people are made that way, so babies can be started.

LEVEL FOUR: (8-10 years old) At this level your child gives primarily physiological explanations. He may know physical facts of life but is unable to understand why genetic material from both mother and father must come together. Sexual intercourse is the major cause of procreation in his mind. His explanations are often mechanical and impersonal.

There are many booklets at public libraries and also at doctor's offices, which show the actual birth process giving pictorial descriptions, beginning with conception and going through the actual birth of the child. If you are more comfortable in using a pictorial guide, these are easy to obtain.

What is most important is that by now you are teaching the process of conception, birth and the growth process. It is also important that at this age you are teaching such principles as modesty and honesty. Children of this age need to know that their body is special, that it is not to be viewed by anyone else. Such things as running from shower to bedroom in undies are cute for a two-year old, but no longer appropriate for a nine-year old. Teaching your child to understand that what we prize we protect is an important lesson. You might say, "If you had a beautiful doll or delicate model airplane you would be very selective in who you let view that prize and that certainly others wouldn't be allowed to handle it unless they treated it with the respect it deserves. You wouldn't show it to everyone because they might want to treat it unfairly and spoil its beauty. It is important to us that you have a good feeling about yourself and your body. You have this good feeling when you care for it properly. Such things as bathing, keeping your hair, finger nails and teeth clean, eating the kinds of food that help you grow and develop and give you health and energy to do the fun things in your life and also the things that will make you a successful, responsible person.

LEVEL FIVE: (11-12 years) A child at this stage recognizes the need for sperm and ovum to join but reflects an understanding that a baby develops from only one of the cells. In most cases, a baby is believed to be in miniature in either the sperm or ovum.

LEVEL SIX: (12 years) These children can understand the physical process involved in intercourse and conception. They can further recognize the necessity of both parents and that each contributes genetic material to the embryo. They are aware of moral and social aspects of reproduction; marriage, however, in their understanding, is not necessary for conception.

It is important that children of this age know the mechanics of sexual intercourse; that when the penis is inserted into the vagina, sperm is passed from the male to the female, which unites with the egg and the process of conception is complete. It is also important to have many conversations about the emotional part of sexual relationship. They should understand that it is a bonding process between two people and that when it occurs within the commitment of marriage, it serves that relationship because of its bonding effect. Being able to give freely of yourself to another person is a rich, growing experience.

Honesty is an important principle to talk about. Youth of this age do have sexual feelings because their bodies are physically capable of them. To deny them or try to ignore them can be harmful because they may be expressed in other ways. Rather they should be encouraged to talk about them and learn to take responsibility for handling them.

Early teens have many concerns about their own sexuality. It is important that you help them assess these concerns and re-assure them that they will eventually become full-grown, healthy men and women. The best sex education is open, confident communication between parents and children as the children learn, grow, and discover themselves. Children will turn to experimentation on their own or to their peers when they don't feel confidence in the information they obtain from their parents.

The Values Surrounding Sex

Children need to learn the purposes and values of sex. They need to know that male-female relationships can increase the chances for proper role identity. A feeling about your maleness or femaleness and the ability to carry out those roles and feel comfortable in doing it are important. If parents, for example, accept two basic purposes for sex: (1) to create new life and (2) to create a bonding between husband and wife. In this case children need to understand that sex should not only involve joy and physical gratification but also a deep commitment and responsibility to others. Children should be taught in a positive way the responsibility as well as the potential enjoyment in relationship to sex. They need to know that the relationship building process is an important element to consider. The ability to solve conflicts is positive and important in relationships. A good relationship will have a sense of movement, an ability to grow.

Remember that there are two very separate issues. One issue has to do with sexual feelings inclinations and urges. These will come whether they want them to occur or not. Children should feel able to talk to their parents about all of this. Children need to feel free to talk about their thoughts and feelings even though they may be confusing, contradictory and very unclear. The other issue is how one chooses to express these feelings and urges. The urges and feelings themselves do not necessarily determine behavior. The behavior must be carefully chosen based on the person's sense of values and appropriateness.

You must decide whether you want to teach your children in a strong positive way that they must create a lasting, permanent, stable caring relationship with a spouse to whom they are legally bound in marriage before they are eligible to enjoy and participate in sex, or whether you want to teach them that sex is permissible under any condition as long as precautions against unwanted parenthood are taken. My experience tells me that to do nothing is to teach that sex is permissible under any condition as long as no one finds out about it. You should also be aware that to teach children to take precautions might be translated in many teenagers' minds as a subtle signal to go ahead and have fun any time you want to as long as you are careful. Teaching teenagers about the dangers of disease is difficult because most seem to have a feeling that they are completely immune to any kind of harm or danger. Trying to scare them is usually ineffective and can often backfire. Attempting to frighten teenagers with fears of possible parenthood is also usually ineffective for the same reason.

It is important that parents work at maintaining a close, loving relationship with their children. Positive attitudes and information about sex cannot be taught in an atmosphere of criticism or open hostility. The best teaching moments are ones characterized by a mutual sharing of ideas and attitudes. Children want to hear how their parents feel about this important subject. They want their parents to share their ideas and information with them. They will, however, resist lectures or forms of preaching.

Teaching your children about sex in terms of facts, attitudes, and values is a great challenge. a challenge that can bring great rewards. To completely fail to attempt the challenge risks bringing great pain and personal sorrow. There is a lot of room for mistakes as long as the process is an ongoing one and the parent makes an honest effort to follow the suggestions outlined here. The only real mistake from which you or your child may not recover is to fail to try.

Sex and Intimacy

Most children grow up not understanding the difference between sex and intimacy. It is intimacy that we really need. Many lost and lonely teenagers are looking for intimacy, warmth and understanding but because they don't know the difference, they end up finding sex. Even sex without intimacy becomes destructive because it fails to meet basic human needs. In fact, because a person may expect that sex will meet emotional needs, they may intensify the destructive impact by thinking that if their needs are not being met by a little sex they will feel better if they get more. No amount of sex can compensate for a lack of intimacy. In order for sex and intimacy to be effectively linked together there must be a firm, lasting, committed relationship. Without the framework of a legal binding contract between two people the likelihood is that sex will eventually become a self-destructive and self-defeating behavior. We can live without sex, but not without intimacy. All of the emotional benefits of intimacy can be achieved without sex. Few if any emotional benefits can be obtained by sex without intimacy.

Sex is characterized by a physical act beginning with stimulation, and continuing with arousal, release and followed by pleasure and gratification. It is very possible for sex to be completely selfish. There may be some emotional impact or even a temporary emotional high. Living without sex will produce temporary frustration.

Intimacy may have some physical closeness and even perhaps some physical contact. It is characterized by understanding, acceptance, being valued by another person, open communication, unconditional positive regard, caring, commitment, love, concern unity and unselfishness. Living without intimacy is destructive of self-esteem. Absence of intimacy will produce depression, hurt, rejection, withdrawal, loneliness and can lead to the development of inappropriate attention-getting behaviors. In immature individuals a lack of intimacy can develop deviant or anti-social behavior.

PERSPECTIVES ON SEX EDUCATION:

- The definition and significance of one's sexuality, male or female, as with personality is partly determined by biology and partly acquired from experiences in childhood.
- Children choose from the values and attitudes the see evident in their family as well as the surrounding community.
- When the family fails to provide adequate or positive definitions and values, children then tend to adopt those most immediately available in the community, among peers or on television.
- Children are, within themselves, compelled to make sense out of what their own maleness or femaleness means.

- Due to the intimate nature of the parent-child relationship, children tend to adopt attitudes, feelings and values more consistent with what their parents espouse rather than what they may otherwise say.
- Much of adult satisfaction in life is attributable to an ability to establish a loving, intimate and long-term attachment with another human being.
- Sex Education, in a broad perspective, is NOT mere instruction in human physiology and anatomy. Of much greater importance is the significance a person attaches to his or body and sexual functions. The issue, at its core, is one of providing positive definition and the instilling of relevant values.
- The meaning which children attach to their sexual parts, their structure and function, is closely allied with how they feel in a more general sense about being a boy or girl.
- Few aspects of one's personality have, and will have, more pervasive and profound impact upon one's life than the meaning and significance he or she attaches to his or her own sexuality.
- Acquiring an appropriate and positive definition (meaning) and appreciation of oneself as a sexual person has been sadly neglected in times past.
- Parents should avoid relating to the child in such a way that he or she associates shame and guilt with his or her body and its sexual parts.
- Parents should recognize and acknowledge children's natural curiosity about their bodies. Curiosity appropriate for one age, however, is NOT appropriate at other ages.
- Children very often acquire a sense of what is appropriate and behave accordingly. However, when they are inclined to behave in inappropriate ways, they very often will do so in such an overt way or under circumstances, which invite detection.
- Children very often need their suspicions confirmed through hearing their parents say that such and such is true.
- Children naturally put together bits and pieces of information and observations to form their own tentative theory. Their questions come from that theory. Additional, more sophisticated information is meaningless and superfluous. Therefore, parents would do well not to confuse the child with explanations for which he has no means to accommodate.
- Questions usually are asked in response to some observations, new understanding, or peer conversation.
- Parents would do well to explore the extent of the child's understanding previous to responding with an explanation, which may confuse the child or cause him to feel guilt or shame within himself or herself.
- If parents wish to have children come to them with their questions about sex, they need to be especially cautious about how they make their children feel when they answer.

There are many ideas and many issues. In all probability what you FEEL most comfortable with will be the most effective for you. The problem arises when you don't feel comfortable with anything.

A Reaction to "Sex Education"

NOTE: The following is an account of a girl's experience in learning about the physical changes that occurred to her during puberty and how they relate to reproduction. Unfortunately, similar experiences are not uncommon among young people approaching adolescence.

My Sex Education:

My experience of attaining the full knowledge of the birds and bees is not the way I want my children to receive their knowledge. I don't think I'm very open when it comes to this subject, because of the traumatic experiences I have had to gaining my knowledge. I realize I have a lot of hang-ups when it comes to sex. I even flinch in writing the word.

I attained my knowledge from friends, things I overheard and some information I got from my oldest brother's playboy magazines, when I baby sat for him. For a long time, I didn't realize that sex and the occurrence of my monthly period were even connected. When I did find out I was amazed.

I remember a few incidences as a child, seeing my mother naked and being amazed when she said that in time I would have a body like hers. She seemed to be uncomfortable so I didn't ask any further questions even though I was very much interested. I always felt that this subject was taboo so when I did start my periods, I had absolutely no idea what was happening to me. I couldn't remember getting hurt so I really was scared and hoped I would get better. The second time it happened my mother found out. I didn't feel at all comfortable about having them.

My foster sister left her journal open on the bed one day so I read what she wrote. She was two or three years older than me and was going steady with a guy. In her journal she described a heavy petting situation with her boyfriend. At the time, I was fourteen and just noticed some sparse hairs growing in my pubic area. I thought I was unique and that no one else had this problem at my age. Sure I heard tales, but I guess I just never thought much about what I heard. The only time I made the connection in my mind between sex and my period, happened at a swimming party. I couldn't go swimming because it was my period. I really wanted to, however. My friends tried to coax me into the water and join in the fun, but I wouldn't.

Finally, I told my closest friend and she gave me a tampon and said that they really work. I guess she took it for granted that I knew how to work this contraption, so I took it and went to the bathroom and wondered how to use it. I stretched it as much as I could and put it in place like a pad. I was just pulling on my swimsuit, when I found that I had bled and stained my white bathing suit. Great! I thought I was weird because I thought that if it worked for my friend and others, then maybe I just bled too much. Later, after swimming we were on our way home, (we were in a camper) and all the girls were changing. I glimpsed Susan's privates and noticed a string coming from her vagina. I couldn't wait till I had money to buy some and experiment. My first attempt was painful. I would try to put it in and I would place it wrong so that it hurt when I stood up or moved. I finally got it in right. later, I found out that the male's penis went where the tampon went. A friend described how big it was, and I was amazed at how a big thing like that could fit. She said that it only hurt the first time. Wow, that blew my mind! I didn't want it to hurt at all.

I will tell my children just what they want to know and not overload them with information. I want them to learn that sex is a very normal and moral thing and under the right circumstances (in marriage), that it is very enjoyable. Especially for my girls, I want them to feel good about their periods. This is really important for me because unless you feel good about your periods, you start to think that guys have all the breaks and you sometimes wish you were a guy.

TEENAGERS:
A Special Challenge

THE NATURE OF TEENAGERS

"Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it living thing."

John Stuart Mill

When children reach about the age of thirteen years, they begin to undergo marked physical, mental and social changes. From this age to about twenty they are among the group in the time of life called adolescence. During this transition, they show some of the characteristics of children such as failure to be consistent in thinking and acting appropriately and some of the characteristics of adults such as being capable of rational thought. During this transition they must face certain developmental tasks such as rejecting childhood patterns, learning how to interact socially, organizing life activities, accepting his or her physique and it's corresponding male or female role, relationships with the opposite sex, achieving emotional independence from parents, choosing and preparing for a vocation and becoming responsible socially (both in attitude and behavior).

As children begin adolescence, they begin to feel, for the first time, the real exhilaration of independent behavior. Although this independence often creates a degree of insecurity, it is also extremely attractive to teenagers. Parents often forget that much of the effort made to train young children is done with the intent of fostering independence. We want our children to learn to fend for themselves. When children enter adolescence, we sometimes become uneasy with their needs for making individual choices, independent of us as parents.

Because independent behavior is frequently viewed as loss of control, parents panic, retreat and overcompensate. These actions sometimes perpetuate or solidify the very behavior the parents fear most and instead of correcting the problem, increase it. Someone once said that children are like sunflowers. If they are allowed to grow and develop with their faces to the sun, they will thrive and be beautiful, but if they are tended to closely, cut down or shaded too much they wither and die or at least do not achieve their full potential. Although this is an oversimplification, it does make an important point.

Independent judgement should be encouraged as long as it falls within the framework of established family rules. Find a time when you can sit down with the teenager and be specific in identifying things you feel that the youth can do in the following areas independently:

- Responsibilities around the home.
- Handling Money.
- Personal Grooming.
- Part-time Job or just doing their work assignment.
- Making his or her own decisions.
- Communication.
- Self-discipline.
- School work.
- Making moral judgements.

To achieve independence, lines of communication must be kept open between parent (or acting parent) and child. To assure that this will happen, you must not be a judge so much as a listener and an interpreter. Remember -- children are good observers but poor interpreters. They see what goes on (parents disagree -- have words -- child thinks they hate each other -- and him or her). Parents need to help children interpret their feelings. This is especially true during teenage years when each child feels that these emotions have happened only to them, that they are different from everyone -- even peers -- and something is wrong with them. PARENTS OFTEN REINFORCE THIS FEELING - DON'T BE A CONTRIBUTOR TO THE PROBLEM.

A PARENTAL ASSESSMENT

Parents should foster a positive, encouraging dialogue, oriented toward expectations. Review the following Parental Assessment. Think about what you are learning from the effort. Any one of the questions listed can lead to a discussion between parent and teen. When you do talk, remember to give support and talk about their abilities, rather than what they should NOT do.

Parents should ask themselves the following questions:

1. Does my teen have a wholesome, normal and desirable attitude toward sex and his or her sexual feelings.
2. Does my teen have a good attitude toward work and does he or she find satisfaction in completing tasks and doing a thorough job.
3. Is my teen making good use of his or her natural talents and abilities.
4. Does my teen have a healthy appreciation of money and is able to handle money matters adequately.
5. Are we able to communicate religious values to our teen and he or she is receptive to our communication.
6. When there is a difference of opinion, are we able to sit down together and discuss the difference and come to a workable conclusion for both of us.

7. Does my teen have a good sense of responsibility around the home.
8. Are expressions of love and appreciation an important part of the relationship between my teen and myself.
9. Is my teen beginning to grasp the "why" of the rules he or she is asked to follow.
10. Is my teen strong enough to stand up for his or her own beliefs and does not feel obliged to "follow the crowd."
11. Does my teen accept and respect the standards of our family.
12. Does my teen understand what is meant by "talking our feelings out" as opposed to "acting them out" in inappropriate behavior.
13. Does my teen have the ability to laugh, to find humor in his follies and mistakes, and to keep going when the going gets rough.
14. Has my teenager chosen friends who enrich his life and encourage him or her to be successful and a happy person.
15. Is my teen working to the best of his intellectual ability.
16. Does my teenager have good control over his or her eating and sleeping habits.
17. Does my teenager treat his or her brothers and sisters with respect.

COMMUNICATING WITH TEENS

Encouragement should be given to talk about feelings. Young people don't find it easy to put their feelings into words. They hardly know themselves what they feel. Ask an upset teenager how he or she feels and they will probably say "I don't know." Some describe their emotional climate as confused and searching. Others act out their frustrations in rebellious or deviant acts against other people or property. Like many of us of other ages, teenagers are groping for a new way of life that will satisfy their longing. Realizing this can help a great deal in your efforts to help him develop the self-confidence he or she needs to become truly independent of you.

Like all of us, teenagers need to know they are loved and appreciated. They need to be told this over and over again. They need to feel important and useful, that they are capable of making a significant contribution. They need parents to work at maintaining clear and open communication channels.

Teenagers listen to adults in direct proportion to the amount of time they feel adults listen to them in a ratio of about 1000 to 1. If you want teenagers to listen to you, do a lot of listening to them.

Encourage young people to write down things that they think and feel. Keeping journals is a great idea. Teenagers particularly can be helped with a variety of emotional as well as normal development problems if they get in the habit of writing their thoughts and feelings down so they can get them outside themselves and look at them. Many things that seem important begin to be seen in proper perspective when they are expressed in language.

The more a teenager feels their maturity is under-rated, the more rebellious they will be, and the more awkward will be the attempts to prove how grown up they are. They need further opportunities to be independent when their experience has let him down, and not ridicule or restraint. The adolescent can become independent only by trying to be. When you want John to keep his room cleaner, make sure he know he has been given full and final responsibility. He needs to know that his room is his and his alone to take care of. He needs to understand what is to be done and how to do it. As a child grow up make sure that you show them how to clean their room and let them practice. When they do part or all of it right, comment on the positive aspects of their efforts. Then at one point it time you need to turn it over to them and let them handle it.

One teenage boy had the responsibility of taking out the garbage each day. It was a responsibility, which he took lightly. Although he had agreed to do it, somehow it never got done. The mother, realizing that nagging wasn't the answer as it only proved to make her miserable, told the boy, "You have the right to choose not to take out the garbage. I have the right to refuse to cook in a dirty kitchen where there is garbage piled up. For three days the mother didn't do any cooking. And finally the boy took his responsibility seriously. If your child has been given the responsibility to water the lawn, make sure they know how to do it, provide the proper tools and then let them do it. Parents often relinquish responsibility by constantly reminding their children of what they are supposed to do. Be careful not to make the rules for doing a particular job too lengthy and complicated.

Compliment when the job has been done. "I like the way the lawn looks." Say nothing when it isn't done well. Compliment children in front of your friends and relatives and also their peer group. In making use of the abilities of your teenager, your attitude as parents plays a greater part than any plan you may devise. Children will copy a grumbling, complaining attitude as well as a cheerful one in taking on the challenge of difficult tasks.

As a young boy, Ted grew up in a family where productivity was the only measure of a person's worth. He was never hugged or told, "I love you because you are my little boy or because you have brown eyes." The only positive reinforcement he ever received was that he was a good boy if he scrubbed the carrots before bringing them in from the garden.

A parent was heartsick over his relationship with his teenage son. When he came into a room where his son was reading or watching TV the young man would get up and walk out. One evening the father approached the son and said, "Son, I'm not happy with our relationship and I'd like to see what we can do to improve it. Perhaps I haven't taken the time to really understand you." ", I'll say you haven't! You've never understood me!" the son flashed back. Inside the father burned, and it was about all he could do to keep from retorting, "Why you ungrateful little whipper snapper! Don't you think I don't understand you! Why, I've gone through the mill. I know the story!" But he restrained this impulse and said, "Well, son, perhaps I haven't, but I'd like to. Can you help me? For instance, take that blow-up we had last week over the car. Can you tell me how you saw it?"

The son, still angry and smarting inside, gave his defensive explanation. The father again restrained his tendency to rush in with his own self-justifying explanation but decided instead continued to listen for understanding. He was glad he'd made his mind up to do this before the test came. As he listened, something marvelous began to happen. His son started to soften. Soon he dropped his defenses and began to open up with some of his real problems and deeper feelings.

The father was so overwhelmed by what was happening between them - for the first time in years - and what he had wanted so badly for so long, he could hardly contain himself. He opened up also and shared some of the deep feelings and concerns as well as understandings he had regarding what had happened in the past. For the first time in years they weren't attacking and defending, but were genuinely trying to understand each other. They continued to visit until early the next morning and discussed many things, most of which were far more important to them both than the concerns they had been dueling and fencing around so long. The son had longed for a relationship with his dad. Inside he had many self-doubts and mixed feelings he wanted to talk about. He would talk to his close friends about some of them but he found himself, in his desire to impress them, never being fully honest.

SUGGESTIONS ON PARENTING FROM TEENS

The late president Eisenhower was once asked about the drastic rise in teenage-parent problems. He shook his head sadly and said, "Everybody agrees that problems exist but too little constructive information is available. Loads of complicated things have been written on the subject, but many mothers and fathers feel the advice frequently given is so far removed from reality that they file the suggestions in the nearest trash can. Maybe the kids have some real simple ideas on what's wrong."

200 teenagers were asked for their counsel on "how to be a good parent." The participating youth, ranging in age from 13-17, were encouraged to

speak out--and they did. Some of their thoughts were duplicated, some were incoherent, some too obvious, others too personal.

The list was pruned and showed to three psychiatrists who specialize in treating adolescents. They felt some suggestions were too one-sided, favoring the teenager at the expense of the parent. They recommended that the suggestions could prove quite helpful to many parents.

The usefulness of these comments depends mostly on the parents' ability to hear them - to hear them from the lips of other kids, and not their own. Here are the suggestions the young people hoped parents would take:

"I think most of our fights are caused by my not understanding what you mean. You could help by explaining things more clearly."

"Is it necessary to always discuss my acne or my grades or my weight? It's bad enough that I worry about them myself."

"Must you ask me: 'Who was that on the phone?' Please allow me some privacy."

"While on the subject of privacy--please don't search my drawers or my closet or try to force open my diary. You wouldn't want me to search your personal things. If you suspect something, come right out and ask me."

"Sometimes I want to be left alone at home. The way I see it, occasionally the parents should get away and leave the child behind. How else can you build up trust?"

"Don't reward me with dollar-bills for each "A" I make. Not everything has a price tag. A word of appreciation is sometimes more valuable than any other reward."

"I hate being bawled out in front of others. If you have something to say, why can't it wait until we're alone?"

"You say that you want to spare me and that's why you shut the door when you two fight. I suppose I can't solve all the world's problems, but who know--in this case maybe I can help. In any event, I will feel needed."

"Don't keep telling me that you're sacrificing your life for me. I want you to live for yourself--not just for me."

"When I choose friends, don't always ask them what their father does or other personal junk that really doesn't matter. After all, if his father is a lawyer, will it make him a better friend than some truck driver's kid?"

"That doesn't mean that you should stand back completely. I really want my friends to know and like you."

"If you allow me some privilege, like using the car, don't always talk about it afterward--how you did something real special. I may not heap thanks on you, but I am appreciative!"

"Don't laugh, but I really want you to read something I've read--and talk about it with me afterward. You'll say that this won't work. But who knows?"

"You may think my music and other stuff like that are real junk. Maybe I'm wrong, but it makes me think that you find it necessary to dislike things I like. I'll bet that if you gave it half a chance you'd get to like them."

"I'm likely to close my ears when you start a conversation with, 'When I was your age...' I just can't picture you at my age!"

"Aren't there times when you're in a foul mood and want to be left alone? That goes for me too."

"Sometimes you could be wrong. When you make a mistake, please admit it. that will sure help us become friends."

"You want me to tell the truth, but sometimes when I do, you hold it against me. This makes me think that the next time, I should lie."

"If I spend my allowance on some dopy things--lecture me about it, but please don't keep harping on it. You don't have to repeat things like that over and over."

"Some conversations on things like sex should be repeated. One drawn-out conversation on the subject that covers A to Z is hard to follow. But that doesn't necessarily mean a long series of lectures."

"About talks on sex, I guess it's pretty natural for you to feel kind of embarrassed. I suppose I feel that way, too. However, my friends tell me that it soon goes away."

"My going steady may seem foolish to you, but if you laugh at it and make fun of it, that just makes me even more determined. I think I could choose a marriage partner more wisely--and maybe be more willing to wait--if you would take things a little easier."

"Please don't try to be one of the gang; I want a mother and father--not more pals."

"Sure, it's nice that you look young. But the truth is that I don't really want you to look too young."

"I really want to have 'heart-to-heart' talks with you, and I'm hoping they don't turn out to be silly or embarrassing. Try to remember that, even though I'm your child, I'm a separate human being."

Perhaps these comments can help parents understand some of the thoughts and feelings their own teens might be having. Parents need to remember that they do not own their children, they have the responsibility to teach them.

LEVELS OF MORAL REASONING

There are a series of stages that an individual's moral reasoning goes through in terms of motivation. Some observers suggest six levels with the goal being that each individual will eventual reach the highest level. These levels are as follows:

1. The motivation is to avoid punishment. [If you don't do the dishes, mother will spank you.]
2. The motivation is to get personal gain. [If you do the dishes you will be paid $ .50]
3. The motivation is to maintain popularity. [If you do the dishes mommy will think you are a good girl.]
4. The motivation is to obey rules and regulations. [The rule in our house is that everyone has a turn doing dishes.]
5. The motivation is to keep an agreement. [I will do the dishes because I said I would.]
6. The motivation is to a principle or a belief.. [I will do the dishes because I want to be responsible to my family by doing my share of the work.]

A children grow and develop we need to keep the growth from one level of motivation to another one in mind. Children are capable of various levels at different times in their life. A child who is ready and capable of operating on level 4 will not be able to respond to offers of motivation at level 6. Adults who operate on levels five and/or six are certainly much easier to live with and build relationships with.

SUMMARY

Self-esteem is a major element in the behavior patterns of teenagers. Of course self-esteem begins at birth not during adolescence but weaknesses and problems with self-esteem become highly evident during the teenage years. Self-esteem is how we regard ourselves and how we feel about ourselves and it is reflected in the way we treat ourselves and the way others treat us. The way we live our life is a measure of our self-esteem.

As children enter the adolescent stage of development, they enter some of the most critical and challenging years of their life. During this period of time, life experiences create a great deal of either positive or negative influence on development of self-identity. Because this is the time when children begin to see themselves as a part of a system or a group, the ability that they have to integrate in one or more groups becomes critical. Often, a teenager is faced with not only positive experiences from peers, but many times, they're subject to criticisms because of the way they act, or talk, or think. Because of this susceptibility to criticism, teenagers often encounter an increased need to please their peers, thus, a teenager may be led either into behaviors which are viewed as positive by society, or if he finds himself associating with people who create negative influences, he may behave in ways which are not only self-destructive, but cause him to be alienated from society. Additionally, a teenager's self-image is under greater personal scrutiny by the teenager, himself. He tends to be particularly more interested in how he comes across on a day to day basis and if criticisms are common, his view of himself will also be affected.

Parents and family can do a great deal in creating a positive atmosphere for the development of a strong self-view in teenagers. But in order for this to happen, it takes a continuous attitude and dialogue between the parents that emanates throughout the family, that a person's strength is more highly valued than the recognition of a person's weakness.

Parents should be very aware of inherent qualities and strengths of their teenage child. Interest should be taken to exploit the strengths of teenagers in a positive way. For example, if a teen has an affinity toward mountain climbing, every effort should be made to encourage the development of this skill. Family outings could be panned wherein the skill of the teen could be emphasized. Discussions could be centered around the skill. The teen could be helped to become aware of the particular strength that he or she has in this area. It might also be possible to allow the teenager to exploit this skill or expose this skill more vividly to friends and therefore wise parents will include peers in activities, which the teenager can show some ability and prowess.

Parents who elaborate the opportunities for nurturing the strengths of their teenager should likewise encourage their teenage sons and daughters to engage in tasks which have been heretofore difficult. This would mean the possibility of exposing them to new and challenging activities, helping them to do things they typically avoid, such as doing service projects, involving themselves in volunteer work, or taking on special tasks in the family, which would require some investment on their part. In one family a teenage son was given the responsibility of the finances in the home at a very early age. At first, this challenge was very difficult, but after some training and exposure to the task, this individual became very adept at managing the money of the home, and could not only pay the bills on time, but also became interested in investments and found ways to increase the earning potential of the family.

A consistent dialogue should go on between parents and children that emphasizes encouragement in an atmosphere of success. Parents should become adept at talking about their successes, not in an exaggerating way, but in a realistic way. Teenagers and children should also be encouraged to identify their own abilities and strengths. For example: The father and mother that take interest in the activity of their children, who support and encourage the efforts of the child will be ahead in fostering an atmosphere of encouragement which gives the message to the teenager, that the things that they do are important. This should be internalized in such a way as to build self-image.

Parents should be continually on guard for modeling a positive self-dialogue. This means that they should talk positively about themselves and their activities and talk positively about the activities of their teenagers. This helps youth think in terms of strengths rather than weaknesses. All too often people can identify areas which they feel are deficits but have little ability to talk about things they tend to be strong in. When a youth develops the habit of talking about strengths, he becomes resilient to discouragement and conflicts which might arise in his life.

Parents should model a "rebounding response." A rebounding response comes as a result of a calm atmosphere in the home, and reflects the ability on the part of the parents to bounce back from frustrations, disappointments and stumbling blocks. If parents are conscious of modeling rebounding behavior, they increase the likelihood that a teenager's resilience to disappointment will be strengthened. This means that when criticisms and disappointments come the way of the teenager, he will be in a position to recover more quickly from these, and see them as challenges for growth, rather than devastations.

It is important during the teenage years that parents give full and final responsibility for the care and development of certain tasks or activities around the home. It is one thing to expect that a teenager performs certain skills in the home, but it's another altogether to give him full and final responsibility. If, for example, a youth has been given the responsibility for caring for his room, a parent should not renege on that responsibility by reminding him to clean it every day. Rather, after two or three weeks of a room not being cleaned, the parents should hold a personal interview, wherein they discus the concepts of responsibility and what the child's past behavior means in view of his development. During that time the parent can reiterate his confidence in the teenager's ability to complete the task, and train, encourage and support as necessary. Typically, during this period, parents' negative demanding does not produce positive results, but rather increases the tendency towards resistance. To further exemplify this point, a child may watch his father for several years load and unload a boat in the water, but the child will never learn to do this on his own unless he's given the responsibility to do it when the age is appropriate. During this time, if the father watches over every move of the teenager, and jumps in and does things which are difficult, instead of allowing the teenager to do it on his own, he'll never learn to load the boat and his father's confidence in him will decrease.

If parents and families learn to identify and elaborate on strengths to develop opportunities for nurturing these strengths, if they encourage the completion of difficult tasks, if they develop an atmosphere of encouragement and success, if they model positive self-dialogue, if they model rebounding behavior, and give responsibility as warranted, the likelihood of a teenager's self-image increasing is enhanced. And as his or her self-image is enhanced, the potential for learning to become a positive and influential parent increases.

COMMENTS FROM A PROFESSIONAL YOUTH WORKER

I have found this job, working with youth, to be much more than just a job, it is a lifestyle. It requires total commitment and dedication – much like being a parent.

To begin with, I have a general concern for the welfare of others which has led me to develop a series of characteristics that have proven to be very useful in this job. One of those is being a good listener. I have found that the majority of the problems I deal with can be solved through reflective listening where I basically restate to them in my own words the information they have given me. Before long, they have found the answer within themselves and the problem is solved without my giving any advice at all.

In resolving almost all problems and concerns I feel the environment I set makes all the difference. One must set the mode through his sensitivity, and empathy portrayed as to create a non-threatening environment so that the boy can feel comfortable disclosing information with out the fear of being betrayed by it. This can be very tricky sometimes, one must be very aware of what the subject seems to be feeling. A great aid to me has been to put myself in their shoes and ask myself how I would feel if faced with the same dilemma.

Apart form the actual counseling of another person, I feel my strengths lie in my dedication, perseverance and integrity because without these characteristics, I definitely would not have made it.

I also feel like I am a pleasant person to be around. I make friends easily and I am a loyal friend. much of the time all that these boys really need is a good friend who will accept them for who they are.

I think that my greatest problem is my strong tendency to get depressed. When life gets difficult and I get run-down, it is a strong temptation to allow myself to fall into the soft, comfortable, protecting arms of depression. There, apathy soothes the wounds of reality and isolation dampers the possibility of another forcing me out. Obviously, there is no room for depression in this job, so it becomes a big struggle when it is upon me.

Another weakness is that, I tend to take things too seriously. Teens will drive you crazy if you let them. I find that I must continually be exercising my patience or I will grow irritated and angry with their immaturity. I am also not a very organized person. I have a strong tendency to do things at the last minute, which has gotten me into some difficult situations. I also tend to dwell on things I can't change anyway. Sometimes I see things that really bother me, but I know there is nothing I can do about it. However, I continue to let it bother me and drag me down.

Emotionally, this job provides much satisfaction. The principle that service brings true happiness is very accurate. In fact, this for me is the core of my strength, it is what gives me the desire and willpower to go on day after day carrying the responsibilities and burdens placed upon me in my position. Those leaders who have not put always, the service of others first and have concentrated on the service of themselves first, have not survived the program. The demands of this job are great but the rewards are even greater.

Therefore, the satisfaction received from this job cover a very wide spectrum. Along with being one of the most difficult and frustrating experiences I have endeavored, it is one of the most rewarding and satisfying.

A POEM WRITTEN BY A TEEN TO HIS PARENTS

I WANT TO BE ME!

My life is all madness
My home is all hell!
I live with great sadness
but you couldn't tell!
I hide my feelings in a sneaky way
And I leave my house wearing a mask every day.
There's always a time when one is in doubt.
We twist and we turn to find a way out.
I've been to this point many times before
to think and to ponder what life has in store.
The tears fall like rain
but I can handle the pain.
Parents will shape you
to what they want you to be.
But why can't they see,
I just want to be me!

What does your family have to offer to this Young Man?

What do you has an adult have to say to this Young Man?

RESOURCES:

Building a Trust Climate to Enhance Communication

Families have the opportunity to do a variety of things together in order to build experience and trust. Eventually families need to talk about the important issues that confront them and the feelings that develop between them. However, in order for this to work families need to begin by talking and working out problems together that have no personal emotional content.

You need to start with simple things to teach how much more fun and productive it is to do things together as a group than as individuals.

On the following pages are a series of structured problem solving exercises, which will help a group of teenagers to learn how to talk to one another and to solve problems effectively.

The first exercise consists of a series of three words with a blank space where a fourth related word is to be written. Use this as an introductory family home evening activity or an icebreaker in some other lesson you are teaching. If you want to make a point about the difference between group and individual effort give a sheet to the most consistent proponent of individualism in your family and have him or her go off in a corner to do the exercise by himself. Then have the rest of the group do the exercise together. In the group there will be a lot of talking and laughing and they will probably get all of the words completed. The individualist will probably get about half of them done and he will be tired of working on it by the time you rescue him from his corner. Talk about the difference between his experience and that of the group.

What is the Fourth word that goes with each of the three words listed?

1.	Stop	Petty	Sneak	________
2.	Elephant	Lapse	Vivid	________
3.	Lick	Sprinkle	Mines	________
4.	Shopping	Washer	Picture	________
5.	Stalk	Trainer	King	________
6.	Sea	Home	Stomach	________
7.	Walker	Main	Sweeper	________
8.	Mouse	Sharp	Blue	________
9.	Envy	Golf	Beans	________
10.	Athletes	Web	Rabbit	________
11.	Pot	Butterflies	Pump	________
12.	Bald	Screech	Emblem	________
13.	Note	Dive	Chair	________
14.	Cherry	Time	Smell	________
15.	Southern	Console	Station	________
16.	Chocolate	Fortune	Tin	________
17.	Bass	Complex	Sleep	________
18.	Wicked	Bustle	Slicker	________
19.	Skunk	Kings	Boiled	________
20.	Habit	Pouch	Road	________
21.	Soap	Shoe	Tissue	________
22.	Blood	Music	Cheese	________
23.	Room	Saturday	Salts	________
24.	Widow	Bite	Monkey	________
25.	Chamber	Staff	Box	________
26.	Inch	Deal	Peg	________

A second exercise is called the "Apes and the Bombers." Each participant is given an index card with some information on it. In order to solve the problem each individual must share the information they have on their card. Some of the information seems unimportant and yet is the key to solving the problem. Other information seems important and is irrelevant. Once each member has shared their information they need to find a way to organize it and make sense of it.

Each card has the following statement on the card in addition to the information:

YOU MAY READ THIS INFORMATION TO YOUR GROUP, BUT YOU MAY NOT SHOW THIS CARD TO THEM.

The various information statements are as follows:

1. Each teacher taught his or her favorite group during the second period.
2. Some have information that does not help to solve the problem.
3. Delores and Sam disagree on how to discipline the Champs.
4. Sylvia taught the Bombers during the second period.
5. Sylvia didn't like the Dinosaurs very much.
6. Bob has taught longer than anyone else.
7. The group task is to find the order the teachers taught the Apes.
8. Dick taught the Champs during the third period.
9. The team leader taught the Apes during the first period.
10. The team that we are talking about has four groups of students who have each chosen a name for themselves rather than be called group A,B,C, and D.
11. During the first period, Sylvia taught the group that Harry liked best.
12. Chapman School is divided into teams. Each team has four teachers and two assistants.
13. There are four periods during the day and each teacher teaches each group of students only once.
14. Sylvia had been at Chapman School for two years. All the others had been there at least three years.
15. Enrollment at Chapman School seems to be on the decline.
16. Sam always works with Bob.

The reason most problem solving discussions in groups fail is because for one reason or another they do not get all of the needed information out on the table. Usually some member of the group has an important piece of information that they do not share because they think it is not important.

The best way that all of this information can make sense is if they organize it into a grid like this one:

	Apes	Bombers	Champs	Dinosaurs
1st Period				
2nd Period				
3rd Period				
4th Period				

The final solution will look like this:

	Apes	Bombers	Champs	Dinosaurs
1st Period	TL Sylvia	Dick	Harry	Bob
2nd Period	Harry	Sylvia	Bob	Dick
3rd Period	Bob	Harry	Dick	Sylvia
4th Period	Dick	Bob	Sylvia	Harry

Another exercise is very much like the Apes and Bombers but it is more difficult and takes more logic to solve. This exercise is called the "Baseball Puzzle Game." There are a series of statements that must be used to determine who plays what position on a baseball team. The statements which should each be placed on a separate card are:

1. Andy dislikes the catcher.
2. Ed's sister is engaged to the second baseman.
3. The Center Fielder is taller than the Right Fielder.
4. Harry and the Third Baseman live in the same building.
5. Paul and Allen each won $20.00 from the Pitcher in pinochle.
6. Ed and the Outfielders play poker during their free time.
7. The Pitcher's wife is the Third Baseman's Sister.
8. All the Battery and the Infield, except Allen, Harry and Andy are shorter than Sam.
9. Paul, Andy and the Shortstop lost $150.00 each at the track.
10. Paul, Harry, Bill, and the Catcher took a trouncing from the Second Baseman at pool.
11. Sam is undergoing a divorce suit.
12. The Catcher and the Third Baseman each have two children.
13. Ed, Paul, Jerry, the Right Field, and the Center Fielder are bachelors, the others are married.
14. The Shortstop, the Third Baseman, and Bill each won $100.00 betting on the fights.
15. One of the Outfielders is either Mike or Andy.
16. Jerry is taller than Bill. Mike is shorter than Bill. Each of them is heavier than the Third Baseman.

This problem needs a grid with the positions on one side and the names on the other edge. It is done by a process of elimination. Information slowly tells you whom to eliminate from consideration for a position on the team until only one is left.

This solution is:

Catcher	Allen
Pitcher	Harry
1st	Paul
2nd	Jerry
3rd	Andy
Shortstop	Ed
Left	Sam
Center	Bill
Right	Mike

Another challenge is called "Luts and Mipps." One card has the following statement:

Pretend that LUTS and MIPPS represent a new way of measuring distance and that DARS, WORS, and MIRS represent a new way of measuring time. A man drives from Town A through Town B and Town C to Town D. The task of the group is to determine how many WORS the entire trip took using the available information.

The available information distributed on separate cards is:

1. It is 10 LUTTS from C to D.
2. A DAR is 10 WORS.
3. The man drives from A to B at the rate of 24 LUTTS per WOR.
4. It is 8 LUTTS from B to C.
5. A MIR is a way of measuring time.
6. The man drives from C to D at the rate of 30 LUTTS per WOR.
7. A MIPP is a way of measuring distance.
8. There are 20 MIPPS in a mile.
9. There are two MIRS in an hour.
10. A LUTT is 10 MIPPS.
11. The man drives from B to C at the rate of 30 LUTTS per WOR.
12. A WOR is 5 MIRS.
13. It is 4 LUTTS from A to B.
14. How many MIRS are there in an hour?
15. How many MIPPS are there in a mile?
16. How far is it from B to C?
17. How far is it from A to B?

18. What is a MIPP?

Yet another variation on this type of problem solving game is called "Who Owns the Zebra." The facts essential to solving the problem -- which can indeed be solved by combining deduction, analysis and sheer persistence -- are as follows:

1. There are five houses, each of a different color and inhabited by men of different nationalities, with different pets, drinks, and cigarettes.
2. The Englishman lives in the red house.
3. The Spaniard owns the dog.
4. Coffee is drunk in the green house.
5. The Ukrainian drinks tea.
6. The green house is immediately to the right (your right) of the ivory house.
7. The Old Gold smoker owns snails.
8. Kools are smoked in the yellow house.
9. Milk is drunk in the middle house.
10. The Norwegian lives in the first house on the left.
11. The man who smokes Chesterfields lives in the house next to the man with the fox.
12. Kools are smoked in the house next to the house where the horse is kept.
13. The Lucky Strike smoker drinks orange juice.
14. The Japanese smokes Parliaments.
15. The Norwegian lives next to the blue house.
16. The red house is in the middle.

NOW! The problem is to determine:

Who drinks Water?
Who owns the Zebra?

GROUP PROBLEM SOLVING EXERCISES:

There are several other exercises, which not only deal with the phenomena of group decision making but also shared information. They deal with situations where the correct solutions are influenced by the ability of groups to encourage each individual member to contribute whatever knowledge and/or experience that they may have. The idea being that if all members of the group pool what they know it is more likely that all of the necessary information will be available.

The two exercises presented here are the "Lost on the Moon" and Lost in the Desert" situations. In both of these you want to give an individual sheet to each member of the group and have them complete it by themselves. Collect these individual sheets and arrange for someone to score them while the group completes the same sheet together as a group. Once done you should score the group sheet and then make some very interesting comparisons.

First, the question is how to do the scoring. You take the ranking of the objects made by the experts and compare it with the ranking made by the participants. The score is the difference between the two rankings. In other words, if a person has a perfect score there will not be a difference and the score will be "0".

You can do an analysis using the following chart:

Group	Best Ind.	Average	Group	Difference
1	22	30	20	+2
2	15	35	25	-10

In this example group one had one individual who scored 22 but the group working together got a score of 20. This is evidence of a group that works very well together. The second group, however, did worse as a group than the best individual. This would mean that for some reason the person who obtained the good score was not encouraged, not able or not willing to share his information with the group. This can be the beginning of a very interesting discussion.

DESERT SURVIVAL PROBLEM SHEET:

The Situation:

It is approximately 10:00 a.m. in mid July and you have just crash-landed in the Sonora Desert in the southwestern United States. The light twin engine plane, containing the bodies of the pilot and the co-pilot has completely burned. Only the airframe remains. None of the rest of you have been injured.

The pilot was unable to notify anyone of your position before the crash. However, ground sightings, taken before you crashed indicated that you are 65 miles off the course that was filed in the VFR Flight Plan. The pilot had indicated before you crashed that you were approximately 70 miles south-southeast from a mining camp which is the nearest known habitation. He also told you, in the event he did not survive the crash, to remain at the scene of the crash until rescued. To leave and try to walk out to safety would be certain death under the conditions in the desert.

The immediate area is flat and except for occasional barrel and saguaros cacti, appears to be rather barren. The temperatures would reach 110 degrees -- which means that the temperature within a foot of the surface will hit 130 degrees. You are dressed in lightweight clothing -- short sleeved shirts, pants, socks and street shoes. Everyone has a handkerchief.

Before the plane caught fire, your group was able to salvage some items. Your task is to rank these items according to their importance to your survival starting with "1" as the most important to "12" the least important.

RANKING	ITEM
________	Flashlight (4 battery)
________	Jack Knife
________	Plastic Raincoat
________	Compass
________	Compress Kit with gauze
________	.43 Caliber pistol
________	Parachute (red & white)
________	1 qt. water per person
________	A pair of sunglasses per person
________	2 qts. of 180 proof Vodka
________	1 top coat per person
________	A cosmetic mirror

DESERT SURVIVAL SCORE SHEET:

4	Flashlight (4 battery)
6	Jack Knife
7	Plastic Raincoat
11	Compass
10	Compress Kit with gauze
9	.43 Caliber pistol
5	Parachute (red & white)
3	1 qt. water per person
8	A pair of sunglasses per person
12	2 qts. of 180 proof Vodka
2	1 top coat per person
1	A cosmetic mirror

REASONS:

1. The most effective signaling device.
2. To slow down dehydration. Can increase the survival time by one whole day.
3. Normal need for water.
4. Signal device.
5. Shade and signaling.
6. For Rigging parachute and cutting cactus for water.
7. Can be used for making a water still. It would take more energy (burning up water) than you would get out of it.
8. To shade eyes from sun. Nice but not essential.
9. Perhaps for signal. Dangerous when people become nervous.
10. Little or no use in the dry desert.
11. Should not be used. You should stay where you are.
12. Alcohol is dangerous in the desert. It takes water from your body to eliminate it from your system thereby contributing to dehydration.

LOST ON THE MOON PROBLEM SHEET:

You are a member of a space crew originally scheduled to rendezvous with a mother ship on the lighted surface of the moon. Mechanical difficulties, however, have forced your ship to cash-land at a spot some 200 miles from the rendezvous point. The rough landing damaged much of the equipment aboard. Since survival depends on reaching the mother ship, the most critical items available must be chosen for the 200 mile trip. Below are listed the 15 items left intact after landing. Your task is to rank them in terms of their importance to your crew in its attempt to reach the rendezvous point. Place number 1 by the most important item, number 2 by the second most important, and so on through number 15, the least important.

_____ Box of matches

_____ Food concentrate

_____ 50 feet of nylon rope

_____ Parachute silk

_____ Portable heating unit

_____ Two .45 caliber pistols

_____ One case dehydrated milk

_____ Two 100 pound tanks of oxygen

_____ Stellar map of the moon's constellations

_____ Life raft

_____ Magnetic compass

_____ 5 gallons of water

_____ Signal flares

_____ First aid kit containing injection needles

_____Solar-powered FM receiver transmitter

LOST ON THE MOON SCORING KEY:

RANK	ITEM
15	Box of matches - Little or no use on the moon
4	Food concentrate - Supply daily food requirements
6	50 feet of nylon rope - Useful in tying injured, help in climbing
8	Parachute silk - Shelter against sun's rays
13	Portable heating unit - Useful only if party on dark side
11	Two .45 caliber pistols - Self-propulsion devices
12	One case dehydrated milk - Food, mixed with water
1	Two 100 pound tanks of oxygen
3	Stellar map of the moon's constellations - To find direction
9	Life raft - CO bottles for propulsion across chasm
14	Magnetic compass - No magnetic poles, thus useless
2	5 gallons of water - Replenishes loss by sweating
10	Signal flares - Distress call within line of sight
7	First aid kit containing injection needles - Medicine valuable
5	Solar-powered FM receiver transmitter - Distress signal transmitter, possible communication with mother ship but only when closer.